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The Medium: A sequence of Ekphrastic sonnets.

Julie Yvonne Edith. Dennison
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The Medium: A Sequence of Ekphrastic Sonnets

by
Julie Dennison

A Creative Writing Project submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of English in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor.

Windsor, Ontario, Canada
1996

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Foreword

A girl, born into a family of psychics, is urged upon reaching puberty to follow family tradition, to become a psychic medium. She is appalled. Louisa thinks that to sell her occult powers would be tantamount to prostitution. She refuses to comply, but she cannot deny her heritage.

The Medium is a sequence of seventy unrhymed ekphrastic* sonnets that address woman's cultural identity, alterity, and representation from within the fictive frame described above. Unbalanced by her paranormal sensibilities, plagued by intrusive entities she neither understands nor wishes to encounter, Louisa struggles for control. These poems figure her reluctant inner odyssey--from fear, through anger, arrogance, resistance and defiance, ultimately to a satisfying reconstruction of the role of medium--in a series of encounters with well-known, often iconic works of art.

A sequence of ekphrastic sonnets is, it seems to me, an ideal medium for cultural critique. Although the speaker of these poems "sees" key moments in Louisa's life, the logic of the vision is intuitive: in *The Medium*, Enlightenment ideals confront contemporary Canadiana, Quattrocento realism queries an expressionist abstraction, a madonna questions morals of annunciatory angels; visions that originate in the akashic records are not ordered by the master narratives of history, geography and patriarchal domination. *The Medium*, poised as it is between the visual and verbal arts, has the advantage of a not this/not that, almost mystically distant point of "view." As the project plays between the image and the written text, between conventions of the narrative, the sonnet, and fine-art history, archetypes of power common to both traditions are revealed. Power can be used, abused, ignored; it all depends on who is in control.

*I follow James W. Heffernan's definition of ekphrasis as writing based upon a work of visual art.

Not a Bawdy House



Jupiter and Io

after Correggio, 1532

They told you it was necessary to be ore and ether,
solid as the flesh, diaphanous as dust, if you sat down
in grandma's velvet armchair, and, although you used
to beat the old cloth, you had never dreamed so many
musty syllables as now, when, with your own clouds
billowing, you grasp the difficulty hidden in your heritage.
Voluptuary Io sits ecstatic: you, the medium know
she must not feel Jupiter's caress. They told you

there was metal somewhere, needles buried in the dark
sfumato you could thread yourself through, if you knew
the system. You must yield, but only to the sharpest
inner eye. *Three times on sentence, twice on word.* Delete the
armchair travels of a god, and you can be the pulse of
influence across the sky, the medium, the message. *Click.*

1. (opposite) CORREGGIO. *Jupiter and Io*. c. 1532. Oil on Canvas, 64.5 x 27.75". Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Plate 694, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



644. LEONARDO DA VINCI. *MONA LISA*. c. 1503–5.
Oil on panel, 30 1/4 x 21" (77 x 53.5 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris

La Gioconda (Mona Lisa)

after Leonardo Da Vinci, 1503

*Ah, Louisa. I've been waiting for you. Come dear, sit beside me
in this nice, soft, velvet chair. What's that? You're trembling.
Mustn't let the dark disturb you. Here, I'll light a candle. Yes,
I promise. Now, you come to grandmother, my dear. It's time.
Oh, bother. Look, she's crimped your hair. Ribbons are a nice touch,
I concede, the red dress even passes--but a pinafore? And starched?
My guests do not like artifice. Your mother, child, is one of those
the angel skipped right over. Hopeless. Never understood. But you do,*

*I can see that. You are one of us, Louisa. And your grandmother is
going to show you something very special. Close your eyes. Yes. Now
when I place my finger in the middle of your forehead, does it tingle?
Isn't that nice? Doesn't it feel--no, don't be afraid, don't squirm, he isn't
going to hurt you, child. You have to let the vision come. Hold still.
Ow! You beastly child. She bit me. Ran off. Didn't even smile.*

2.(opposite) LEONARDO DA VINCI. *Mona Lisa*. c. 1503-5. Oil on panel. 30.25 x 21". Musée du Louvre, Paris. Plate 694, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



Woman With Gloves

after Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. c. 1892

The first time she is truly clear about the threat,
she lights the thirteenth candle, hears her daughter
scream: *This is a cardboard world, with matches everywhere.*
She can remember mother's warning: *One day, you*
will have to leave the child with me. This errant Horror
skips a generation. You are free; but she, as clipped as feathers,
needs to learn the ways of spirits. To protect herself. Oh, that
"with me." The tenor could extinguish a maternal star.

That is the very day a painter finds her irresistible:
sitting on a park bench in a muslin gown, gazing so
far off she seems transparent. As he brushes through
a veil that doesn't hide, a glove that doesn't warm,
he wonders how a woman so contained as this
would fare, were she committed to the medium.

3. (opposite). TOULOUSE-LAUTREC. *Woman With Gloves. c. 1892.* Oil on cardboard. 54 x 40 cm. Jeu de Paume, Paris. in Russell Ash. *The Impressionists and Their Art.* London: Orbis Publishing, 1983: 178.



715. ALBRECHT DÜRER, SELF PORTRAIT 1500
Oil on panel, 20 1/2 x 19 7/8 (51.8 x 50 cm.)
Pinakothek, Munich



716. ALBRECHT DÜRER, ADAM AND EVE 1504.
Engraving, 9 3/4 x 7 7/8 (25.2 x 19.4 cm.)
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Self Portrait; Adam and Eve

after Albrecht Dürer, 1500 & 1504

You haven't seen your own reflection since the day she took you
to the south wing, sat you down before a shimmering tapestry
and tossed its images aside. *Look*, she said, *into the mirror*.
Never come into this room alone. But frantic figures raced.
You stood, next day, intent before the panorama, had to know
what all those men and dogs were doing. *Hunting unicorns*,
a voice like Grandma's whispered from behind the tapestry.
And that was when you stepped through, first time into ripples--

--bearded man, and older, one who hadn't eaten, slept or
spoken for so long words curled in on themselves and twisted
strands of his exquisite hair into a portrait fine enough to hold
your gaze. Had you then caught the fingers' serpentine pursuit of
mink trim on his housecoat, they might not have snaked through,
bitten apple, taken you for ever. Had you caught them, seen.

4. (opposite-upper) ALBRECHT DÜRER. *Self-Portrait*. 1500. Oil on panel, 26.25 x 19.25".
Pinakothek, Munich. Figure 715, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall.
revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.

5. (opposite-lower) ALBRECHT DÜRER. *Adam and Eve*. 1504. Engraving, 9 7/8 x 7 5/8".
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Figure 716, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice
Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



632. ANDREA MANTEGNA. ST. SEBASTIAN. c. 1455-60.
Tempera on panel, 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ ×11 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (68×30.6 cm).
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

St. Sebastian

after Mantegna, 1455

The morning after Grandma speaks to spirits, someone has to set the room right. Windows must be shuttered, candles snipped, the motes of dust and wonder aired. Having seen behind the tapestry, you are prepared to wrestle flying teacups from the air, wrench chairs and damaged figurines down from ceiling, even mend the velvet covers. But repair the hanging? You'd as soon submit the needlepoint to classic columns, egg-and-dart

yourself into a tempera-on-panel block of two dimensions, be a cushion for the pins and needles someone else will use to prick his name. *Sebastian*. Burning in your forehead, arrows piercing from below but not within. And always ropes and ruins, figures in the clouds. On horseback, someone in the distance, flying where you can't see.

6. (opposite) ANDREA MANTEGNA. *St. Sebastian*. c. 1455-60. Tempera on panel, 26 3/4 x 11 7/8". Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Figure 632, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



The Book of Urizen

after William Blake, 1794

Lemon-polished hardwood, beeswax dripped upon the floor
and iron shackles mingling with gasps of last night's candles--
you are not sure what will burn into the ether when
you squat beneath grandmother's table, only that there
is a caustic something out there. Flickers, gusts, sulphuric
traces, lingering. And then the unexpected, intimate
caress. You shudder. Pulsing in your forehead is a knot
of viscous pity, swelling, threatening to burst; it bites

into the polished copper surface of your mind. An acid
links your blood to his, your bearing to his glowing foetal
posture. Corrosive sweat, the manacles of his infernal
method--only these compare to sitting under dark mahogany,
crouched in the abstract service of so many bearded men.
Uncertain what will burn. There are so many guests.

7. (opposite) WILLIAM BLAKE. *The Book of Urizen*, Plate 11, 1794. Relief Etching, colour printed. British Museum, London. Plate 77, David Bindman. *Blake as an Artist*. Oxford: Phaidon, 1977.



Prima Ballerina

after Edgar Degas, 1876

One thing to submit, another, for a seer to be flung
 from an accustomed lookout into mannerist expansion.
 Flames. A Prima Ballerina taking final bows. You'd like
 to sink deep into velvet, smother voices, block out everything
 but mother's mother's chair, that single candle burning
 at the--*flicker*--centre, reaching--*agony*, *charred flesh*--the ultimate
 impression. If, that is, it ended in applause. But arms stretch,
 whispered wings, to seas of faces: you become the dancer,

pirouetting too close to the frame. A flash ignites you,
 chignon, tutu, leotard and velvet ribbons; you are blazing
 in excruciating limelight, tulle and roses catching fire. Panic
 chars the flesh, bursts into conflagration. Even as you run
 your fingers over the familiar--*curtains*--you, the psychic
 vehicle in flames, the message, can't stop screaming.

8. (opposite) EDGAR DEGAS. *Prima Ballerina*. c. 1876. Oil on canvas, 23 x 16.5". Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Figure 918, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



691. EL GRECO. *THE BURIAL OF COUNT ORGAZ*. 1586. Oil on canvas.
16'x11'10" (4.9x3.6 m). S. Toré. Toledo, Spain

The Burial of Count Orgaz

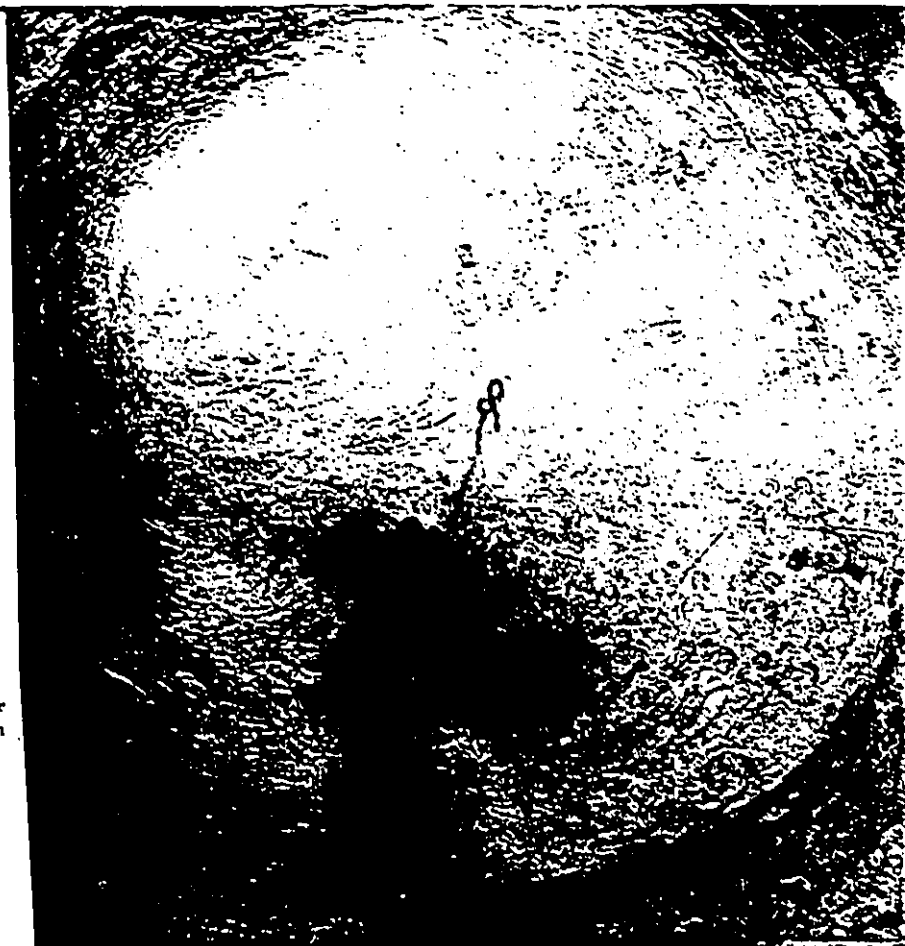
after El Greco, 1586

You are turning in your sleep when something cuts
through dream stuff: *Hurry, I need help tonight*, you hear,
so many. And the back stairs creak and rattle. You tear into
a scratchy something, tight about the neck, and black--
but everything is black--and everyone is waiting, so you
bolt down hall, up stairs, in door, through empty parlour,
right up to the gleaming tapestry before you notice that
the eyes are closed: the voice was not grandmother's.

And the hanging falls. You look--not up, not down--
but back into a ruffed and bearded mass. And torches.
Have to twist what wisps of will remain into a thread
and, if you would not snuff, then weave, shroud, guide
the mannered through the difficult midwifery of angels,
quick, before the air congeals and you awaken, tired.

9. (opposite) EL GRECO. *The Burial of Count Orgaz*. 1586. Oil on canvas, 16' x 11' 10". S. Tomé, Toledo, Spain. Figure 691, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.

105. J. M. W. Turner, *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) - the Morning after the Deluge - Moses writing the Book of Genesis*, Oil on canvas, 78.5 x 78.5 cm. R.A. 1832, with the caption:
 'The ark stood firm on Ararat; th'returning sun
 Exhaled earth's humid bubbles, and emulous of light
 Reflected her lost forms, each in prismatic guise
 Hope's harbinger, ephemeral as the summer fly
 Which rises, flits, expands, and dies.'
Fallacies of Hope, M.S.
 (BJ 405)



881. JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER. *THE SLAVE SHIP*.
 1840. Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 48" (90.5 x 122 cm).
 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
 Henry Lillie Pierce Fund (Purchase)

The Slave Ship; Morning After the Deluge

after J.M.W. Turner, 1840

A dark raft washed in cobalt slowly roils as bloodlight seeps through eyelids, and you are reluctant to awaken. Someone, somewhere, screaming. But this morning's quick chrome, pulsing orpiment and cold-drawn oil ensanguined--Goethe's buoyant *plus*--whirls a tinted steam of choristers who can't decide between a shark's tooth and the seventh circle's endless spin. A hazy beardless patriarch, whose pale-washed verditer and smalt flash-flood the lower abyss and shatter heaven's

windows, bursts in rippling, echoing light through all the fallacies of hope you ever entertained. With pen--or is it brush?--in hand, it's so much more than mourning. Water turns to blood, to gesso, canvas, pigment. You, the drowning slave of painting after painting, always slipping through the evanescent portal, always going under for the last time.

10. (opposite-upper) J.M.W. TURNER. *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory)--the Morning after the Deluge--Moses writing the Book of Genesis*. Oil on canvas, 78.5 x 78.5" Tate Gallery, London. Figure 305, John Gage. *J.M. Turner: A Wonderful Range of Mind*. New Haven & London: Yale U.P., 1987.

11. (opposite-lower) J.M.W. TURNER. *The Slave Ship*. 1840. Oil on canvas, 35.75 x 48". Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Figure 881, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.

MARY CASSATT (1844-1926)



GIRL ARRANGING HER HAIR, 1886

canvas, 73 x 62.5 cm (29 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins)

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Chester Dale Collection

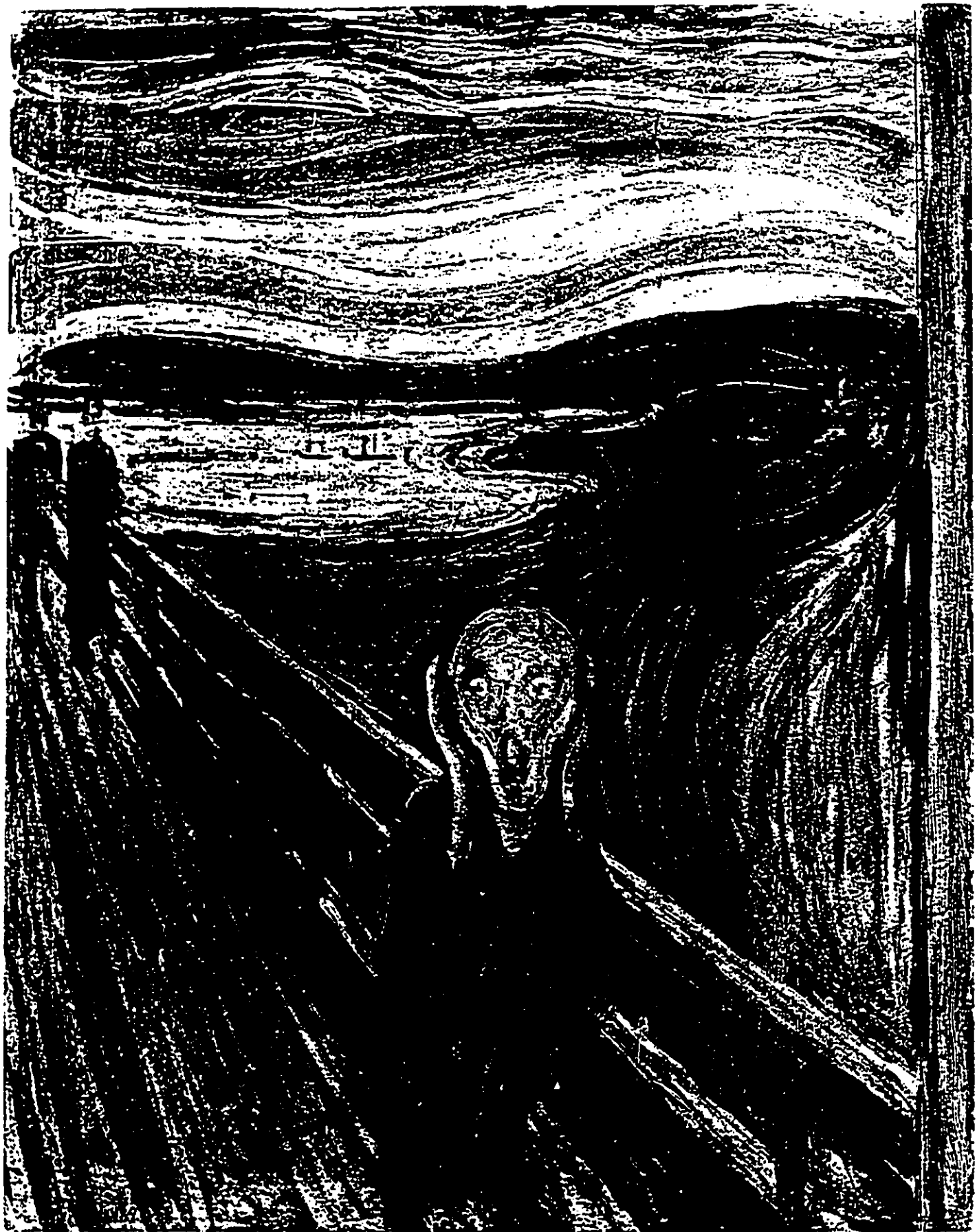
Girl Arranging Her Hair

after Mary Cassatt, c. 1891

Habits are so hard to break. Grandmother said you must take care of your appearance for the clients, but with someone always waiting in the mirror, wanting to reach out and--*What is this you're doing?*--touch, run fingers through the thick, dark, chestnut flood of hair, you want to snood it back or cut it like a boy's, or better, shave your head, do anything to make you less a vision to the stranger in the glass. Afraid he will

sweep puberty right off its feet. Each time you look, another man is looking back, a figure always changing, stretching, straining to achieve the perfect contour of your full lips. Hair and brushes. If your skin were not so vivid, if the clavicle were less pronounced, you think, you might just smash the mirror in the face.

12. (opposite) CASSATT. *Girl Arranging Her Hair*. 1886. Oil on canvas. 75 x 62.5 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington. in Russell Ash. *The Impressionists and Their Art*. London: Orbis Publishing, 1983: 86.



EDVARD MUNCH. THE SCREAM
1893 (figure 958)

The Scream

after Edward Munch, 1893

A cardboard dream is schizophrenic fire
 redding rage across a mockery of sky
 an underdraught of emerald and purple
 hills that heedless gush under a footbridge
 wind and river draining under guardrail
 steam a train is racing so toward you
 hands no longer hold on to the earth sky
 water scream there is no need to scream

the glut of strokes a torrent wax resists but
 you can only hold your ears the couple who
 stroll gingerly toward the hot macabre do not
 hear the pigments do not know without the aid
 of apparitions getting closer closer to the core
 that rage they are about to detonate a world

13. (opposite) EDVARD MUNCH. *The Scream*. 1893. Oil and casein on cardboard, 36 x 29".
 Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo. Figure 958, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall.
 revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



JAN VAN EYCK, WEDDING PORTRAIT
1434 (figure 553)

Wedding Portrait

after Jan Van Eyck, 1435

Focus on the liquid eye, the clear, austere,
innately viscid centre of a cryptic glass, smooth
as leisured fingers, unobtrusive as a candle
burning in a chandelier. A single candle:
how symbolic. Pregnant reds, fine velvet
greens, the veils of deep mid-winter stiff but
balanced by a silver cord. *A world of spirits,*
civil and contained, one thinks--until the

others, vaguely rippling on the wall,
within the mirror, catch the eye. Atrocities
bound by twist and turning Passion scenes
depicted in medallions, iniquities of circles,
signs, your-hand-in-mine arrangements:
there, yet not there, sullenly significant.

14. (opposite) JAN VAN EYCK. *Wedding Portrait*. 1434. Oil on panel, 33 x 22.5". The National Gallery, London. Figure 553, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



998. PABLO PICASSO. *LES DEMOISELLES D'AVIGNON*. 1907. Oil on canvas, 8'x7'8" (2.43x2.33 m).
Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon

after Pablo Picasso, 1907

Who, you wonder, flakes the tain? Who scratches there?
And if the end of provocation is desire, why should the
red-brown rush of you, deep as a chill spring, soothing,
be caught up in twisted ice and angles, *as-you-like it* tight,
because at any moment grandmother expects another
mirror-man to lunge at you? Must every image shatter?
Must banality geometrize? Each time you pass by
someone else is groping but, who dares to speak this

body into shards, who is it that insinuates an almond stare
into so rippling a reflection? You are more intent on what
you see than on the militant dimension he is spinning in
the back of you; you find it most unnerving when he cups
your chin, and wrenches. Facing both ways, suddenly
the still-life chunks of you solidify, and you begin to rage.

15. (opposite) PABLO PICASSO. *Les Demoiselles D'Avignon*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 8' x 7' 8".
Figure 998, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded
Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



835. SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. *MRS. SIDDONS AS THE TRAGIC MUSE*. 1784. Oil on canvas, 93×57½" (236.5×146 cm).
Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery,
San Marino, California

Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse

after Sir Joshua Reynolds. 1784

The first time that you see her in a vision, grandmother is ice and ivory and spotlit bone, bewigged and gowned in rusty taffeta. Enthroned upon a book of shadows. She insists you join her musing. *You must thunder through, Louisa. There are gentlemen with gifts who grow impatient.* In the dark behind her is a ruddy figure who demands you swallow from an angry chalice, and another quiet sort who contemplates a bloody dagger in his hand. You say,

my mind is not a bawdy house, Grandmother, turn to leave, but Look, she says, and you see she has pearled and stringed and knotted strands of you about her neck, that velvet from your favourite gown is spread out wantonly upon her lap inviting most illicit touches. Cannonballs begin to roll down wooden chutes as you declare: *No more. Now it is mine.*

16. (opposite) SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse*. 1794. Oil on canvas, 93 x 57.5". Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California. Figure 835, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.

Then There Are the Gods

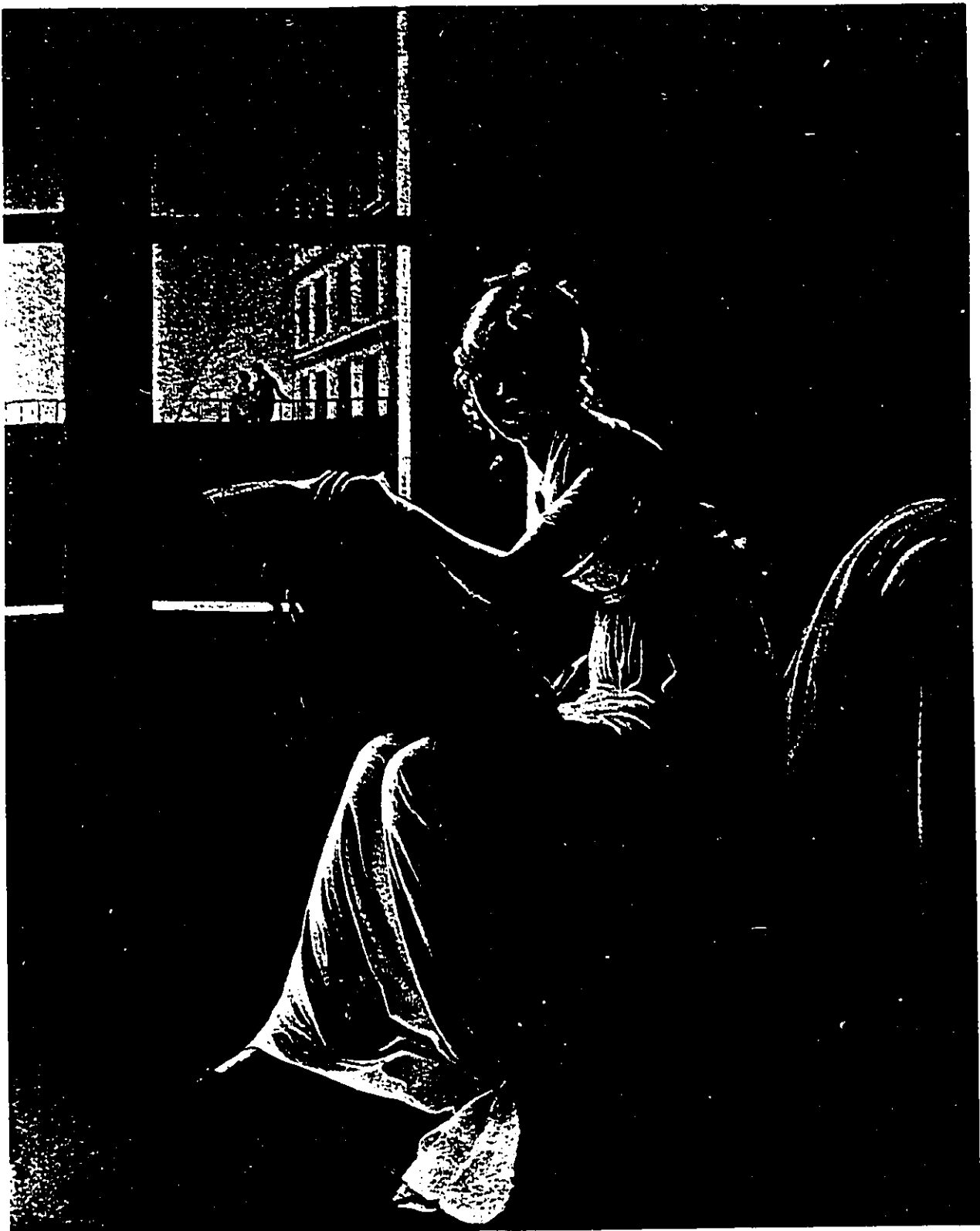


PLATE 1. Constance Marie Charpentier, *Mlle. Charlotte du Val-d'Ognes*. 63 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 50". Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection, bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, 1917.

Mlle. Charlotte du Val-d'Ognes

after Constance Marie Charpentier, c. 1801

It is summer, hot and very close. You think: *I need a lesson*, but with aisle set and palette poised, Madame insists you take the pose. *Soleil. Jardin. Chapeau de Paille*. You want to please, but having seen so much dissimulation disregarded by so many, in a fit of temper, you tear off that nuisance of a sunhat and discarding feathers, ribbons, wild across the well-clipped lawn, you dash, half-naked, shouting: *Follow! This way!* She is panting by the time

she makes it to the attic, and by then you've changed into a simple muslin, something of a goddess in the folds but sleeves short, fitted, functional. The room is bare, the window cracked. A Flemish glow, brighter than the sun on lovers you will later sketch, illuminates. No man could have--has ever--made so fine an offer.

17. (opposite) CONSTANCE MARIE CHARPENTIER. *Mlle. Charlotte du Val d'Ognes*. c. 1851. Oil on canvas, 63 1/2 x 50 5/8". Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Figure 1, Elisa Honing Fine, ed. *Women and Art*. Montclair & London: Allanheld & Scram/Prior, 1978.



842. ANGELICA KAUFFMAN. *THE ARTIST IN THE CHARACTER OF
DESIGN LISTENING TO THE INSPIRATION OF POETRY* 1782.
Oil on canvas, circular 24" diameter (61 cm).
The Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood, London [English Heritage]

The Artist in the Character of Design Listening to the Inspiration of Poetry

after Angelica Kauffmann, 1782

Cascades of carmine eddying about her ankles,
the muse of poetry lights fleetingly between a pair
of columns and your own ingenuous white form.
She coaxes--*Let me just reveal a little*. Fine georgette
slips fetchingly from your right shoulder. Why,
you wonder, when you are light, the very shadow
playing on her lyre, did you paint laurels in her hair?
You bolt up, slap her hand, brush madly, shrieking out:

Is this the art you call "adornment?" She cries: *Sister, it was
just--*then silence. Since the sketch was a preliminary,
it will be forgotten, just as easily as false notes are
forgiven. You need not display your underpaint.
Why should you when you have the pleasure of
your pencils and a private room in the Uffizi?

18. (opposite) ANGELICA KAUFFMANN. *The Artist in the Character of Design Listening to the Inspiration of Poetry*. 1792. Oil on canvas, circular 24" diameter. The Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood, London [English Heritage]. Figure 842. H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall, revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



THE KISS. MARBLE. 1886.

The Kiss

after August Rodin, 1886

Late one night, you fall asleep in grandma's parlour,
waken to a smell of ginger, cinnamon and fennel
wafting up the back stairs: someone's making *chai*.
You can't believe you left the window open, you forgot
to draw the curtains, after being burned so many times
that you were fool enough to let the sun's lips kiss your
fevered mouth, again. Masala. Fingers on your thigh, like
chilies, blistering the skin. Arms about his neck but you are

stiff, unwilling, and if you can't pull your marble self away
from him, you know you'll never see another chisel, never
knit another brow. Teeth clenched, tongue aflame, you
wonder if the milk has boiled yet, whether grandmother has
even thought to dip her scoop into the tin of mountain tea.
You shudder. Red cayenne, his eyes. And you remember.

19. (opposite) AUGUSTE RODIN. *The Kiss*. 1886-98. Marble, over lifesize. Rodin Museum, Paris. Figure 933, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



FIG. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith and Maid-Servant with Head of Holofernes* (ca.1618), 72 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 55 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Courtesy of The Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Leslie H. Green.

Judith and Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes

Artemesia Gentileschi, c. 1625

La Pittura draws from life. To draw this
bleeding instant of the split from body—
one of you a fury and the other—is to feel
at once the plague of a persistent phallus
and the thumb screw, the enormity of being
severed and the borrowed sword. You are
a servant of a servant, at the beck and call
of rage, and you are raging at the voices

clamouring outside the frame. His weapon
fits your hand; his armour never will. A metal
tear dangles from the lobe of an assaulted ear,
a scarlet ribbon blushes in a bow. You shade
your eyes. The candle flickers. It and edges
are the only comforts you will know this night.

20. (opposite) ARTEMESIA GENTILESCHI. *Judith and Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*. c. 1625. Oil on canvas. 72.5 x 55.75. The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit. Figure 740, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



775. PETER PAUL RUBENS. *THE GARDEN OF LOVE*. c. 1638. Oil on canvas, 6'6"×9'3½" (2×2.8 m). Museo del Prado, Madrid

The Garden of Love

after Peter Paul Rubens, 1638

Black enough to swallow light, and with a nap so deep
it almost buries fingers, yards of silken velvet trimmed
with fine Etruscan lace drape lavishly about your form.
You need not be so shy, the painter says, *with charms this*
adequately covered. But a gentleman across the courtyard
has engaged your eye. His head is haloed with the same
dark pigment as your gown, his gaze is red as Rubens',
and you can't ignore the cupids swarming in the garden,

playfully assaulting women fully clothed; they tickle
darts through heavy gowns. And Rubens' arm encircles
you; his hand in yours reminds you there is something
in the shadows of a temple he would have you enter,
something caught in stone. Amphitrite is emptying
her breasts into a fountain, and her face seems troubled.

21. (opposite) PETER PAUL RUBENS. *The Garden of Love*. c. 1638. Oil on canvas. 6' 6" x 9' 3.5". Museo del Prado, Madrid. Figure 775, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



Daphne and Apollo

after Gianlorenzo Bernini, c. 1623

There are the fools a woman suffers gladly,
 then there are the gods. Apollo, for example,
 who insists a hand upon the belly until flakes of
 flame begin to spark breath caught between a
 shimmer and the paeon of your softest skin.
 The pace of a subtractive process. Even as
 he takes, a god is taken by the stiffest breeze,
 a marble trunk becomes essentialized within

the *Galleria* of the mind. He is as light in stone,
 as he is heavy-handed. Lust--Apollo's sport, and
 Daphne's--scabs your flesh into a bark, twigs out
 from ends of fingers; you wear laurels in a form
 even a nymph could never love. The victory
 of chisels? The eternally erotic? Not a new pursuit.

22. (opposite) GIANLORENZO BERNINI. *Apollo and Daphne*. 1622-24. Marble, height 96". Galleria Borghese, Rome. Figure 21, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



Women Running on the Beach, 1922
Oil on plywood, 13 3/4 x 16 3/4 in.
Musée Picasso, Paris

Women Running on the Beach

after Pablo Picasso, 1922

What is it startles you, this sun-split morning,
 shattering the certainty that you are mistress
 of the gaze? What leaps, what crashes? Only
 when the dust begins to settle can you see,
 caught in shivers on the floor but beaming,
 what you thought forever lost. A mirror is
 an open window. Listen: waves. The ones
 you always wanted--two, too solid women

running out of space and time and out of all
 proportion on the blasting beaches of desire.
 All quick stone, glazing-over breasts, and skin
 so pervious to sense--your very eyes are silvered--
 that distortion in the blood runs freely to an open
 sore, is wild salt, stiff, exhilarating in the breeze.

23. (opposite) PABLO PICASSO. *Women Running on the Beach*. 1922. Oil on plywood, 13 3/8 x 16 3/4". Musée Picasso, Paris. in Ingo F. Walther. *Pablo Picasso*. Köln, Germany: Benedikt Taschen, 1993: 53.



I and the Village

after Marc Chagall, 1911

You know that you are not a white cow--but the way
green light illuminates his face, you'd think he thinks
he is the very grass you need to grow. It's dizzying.
Before you even cross the fine line into empty eyes
you have to draw the circle of your iris closed, know
that its magic pupil is protected from whatever toxic
rays the flowers might emit. He has been known to
crystallize an udder in the middle of a milking, stellify

the most vertiginous of moos. But you are not a bovine
dream, don't follow milky paths to fields of colour; you do
not hallucinate diagonals between the teeth, grind planes
that swallow only to regurgitate, chew sentimental cud.
The token that the little man above your head is offering
the girl, as you can see, is not a nosegay but the village scythe.

24. (opposite) MARC CHAGALL. *I and the Village*. 1911. Oil on canvas. 75.5 x 59.5. The Museum of Modern Art, New York Figure 1008, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



The Sower

after François Millet, 1850

You think the fall of darkness and a sloppy hat disguise
 you, that a peasant's muscled thighs distract me from
 a flock of screaming crows that springs up out of seeds
 you scatter into fading light. And while the prospect of
 a field to harvest might have fogged my mirror, loose limbs
 might have rushed me willfully Romantic once, I find
 I am no longer tyrannized by veneration. Mist is relative.
 The moment, black-winged, is a scavenger. It cries:

Why are we faceless? Why so monumentally alone? I watch
 you from a distance--seeding, indeterminately lit by
 what is left of summer. If you turned to me and squinted,
 features might begin to sharpen; you might hear, might
 smell the hazed and ruddy cliffs, the sea. But you think,
She is just a figment. Shake your head. As always, blink.

25. (opposite) FRANÇOIS MILLET. *The Sower*, c. 1850. Oil on canvas, 40 x 32.5". Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Figure 874, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



Sower with Setting Sun (After Millet)
Arles, June 1888
Oil on canvas, 64 × 80.5 cm
Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo

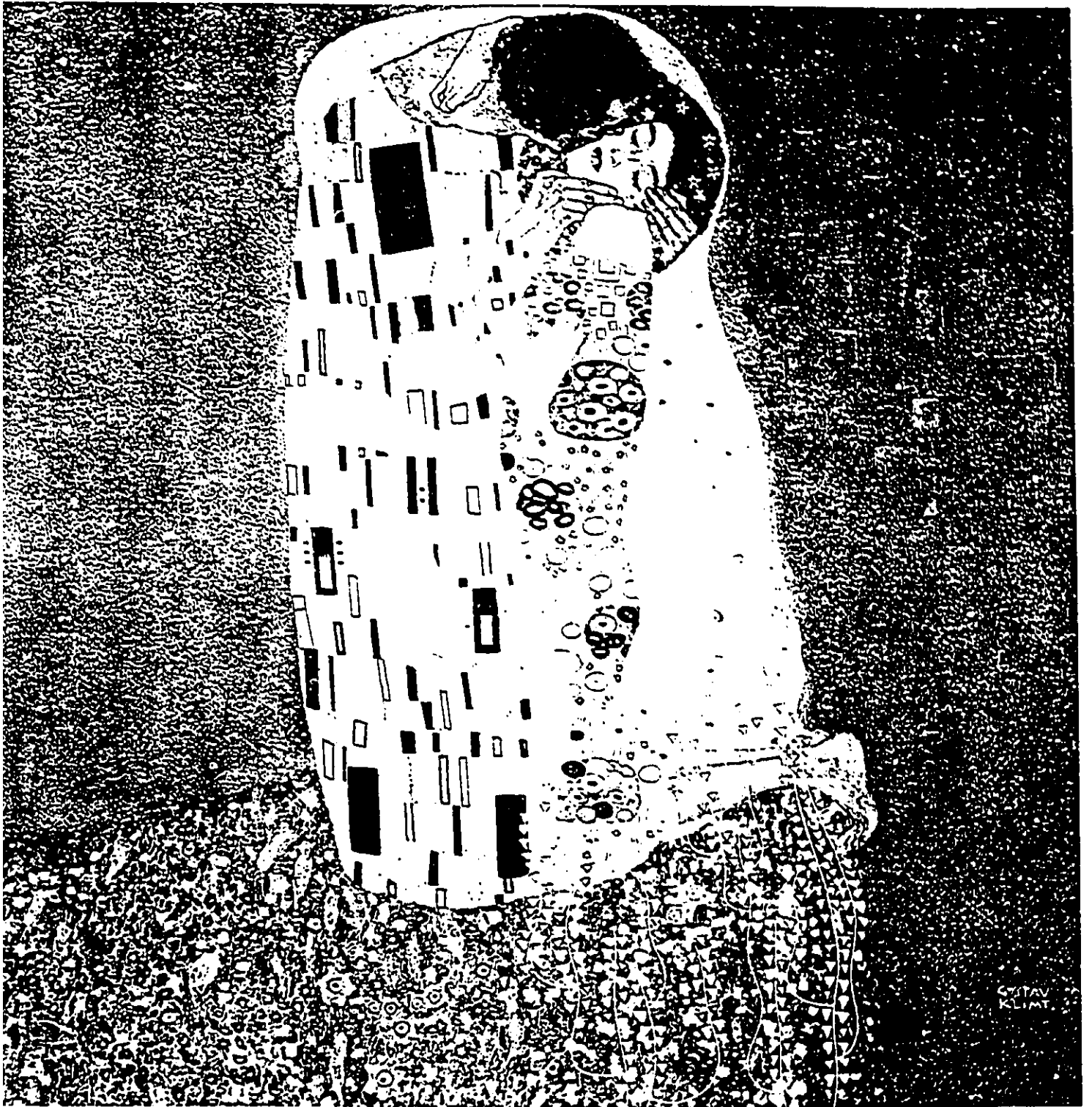
Sower with Setting Sun (after Millet)

after Vincent Van Gogh, 1888

A practiced figure sowing ravens in a field all violet
and gold-vermilion shadows--only you would plant
when all the neighbours' wheat is ripe and writhing
for the scythe, and only you--Who are you?--dare to cast
between the figure and its ground. A canvas, listening:
the engines of a not-so-subtle sun. What do you sow
between the pigments? How small is a raven seed?
Can vehemently brittle hues root into a blue haze,

break the earth and, rising--if I knew no better, I would
swear I heard this--call, call, call themselves flapping up
out of the earth, as black as these? Once so indifferent
a sower, now you are this pastose disk of minerals and
seed oil casting light in all directions, beaming straight
into my eyes. We are so consummately mis-matched.

26. (opposite) VINCENT VAN GOGH. *Sower With Setting Sun (after Millet)*. Arles, June, 1888. Oil on canvas, 64 x 80.5 cm. Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo. in Ingo F. Walther. *Vincent Van Gogh*. Köln, Germany: Benedikt Taschen, 1990: 54.



The Kiss, 1907/08

The Kiss

after Gustav Klimt, 1907

You know that if you gaze upon the sun it can destroy
your vision--even its reflection is anathema, burns so
thrillingly you cannot tell your wake from sleeping--
but you happen to forget. One sultry night, you squint
at shadows on the perfect lady moon; she has her
darker moments, and they burst into a gilded flood,
embrace you. *Come*, she coaxes, *dream with me*. And
caught up in a kiss you can't decide if you are giving

or receiving, you become *his* crown of laurels, *her*
forget-me-nots, *their*--old log cabin and a crazy quilt
all cells and squiggles--patterns mingling, meshing,
pulsing amber light. Upon a bed of nails? Of flowers?
Do not be concerned. You are the sun, the sun's lips and
the lips he kisses. You, the swimmer with the open eyes.

27. (opposite) GUSTAV KLIMT. *The Kiss*. 1907-8. Oil on canvas, 70 7/8 x 70 7/8". Österreichische Galerie, Vienna. Figure 959, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



929. THOMAS EAKINS. *WILLIAM RUSH CARVING HIS ALLEGORICAL FIGURE OF THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER*
1877. Oil on canvas, 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (51.1 \times 67.3 cm).

The Philadelphia Museum of Art. Given by Mrs. Thomas Eakins and Miss Mary A. Williams

William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River

after Thomas Eakins, 1877

Naked to the chill of some ascetic goddess who
agrees to stand in one place, all her weight on
one leg for eternity, you find you can endure
the click of Mother's knitting needles if you
close your eyes. Doves outside the window then
begin to chant Greek myths and each flake of
the sculptor's marble strikes a perfect C before
it hits the floor. You root into a stump beneath

your feet and, seeking water, tongue and groove
your way across the hardwood to a chair that holds
your dress and underthings, then over to an open light.
Your skin, so liquid from a distance, satisfies a thirst
you didn't know you had, and you are eager to enjoy
whatever flight of form the medium might next propose.

28. (opposite) THOMAS EAKINS. *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River*. 1877. Oil on canvas, 20 1/8 x 26 1/2". The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. Figure 929, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



Portrait of Mäda Primavesi

after Gustav Klimt, c. 1912

Long and straight and oh-so-neatly combed,
 you stand up to the blue for boys and pink for
 promises in stiff organza mother cut as white and
 shapeless as your bones; you know your set lips,
 steady hand on hip and feet securely anchored
 to an air of pigments slowly coalescing counter
 any predilections: this is not about the hair. He
 wants to fluff your fine potential, sweep you up

and down—he would do anything to get you down—
 to pound rare earths against you, wave on wave of
 hats, muffs, feathers, a kaleidoscope of flowers. Rose
 of feldspar, pale of quartz, oh brittle chip of mica on
 imagined shoulder: satin knotted awkwardly above your
 ear may one day slip, but granite is a rock that never will.

29. (opposite) GUSTAV KLIMT. *Portrait of Mäda Primavesi*. c. 1912. Oil on canvas, 150 x 110.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. in Gilles Néret. *Gustav Klimt*. Köln, Germany: Benedikt Taschen, 1993: 66.

213. Astarte Syriaca.
Oil on canvas, 72 x 4
Manchester City Art G.
Manchester, England
1888



Astarte Syriaca

after Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1875

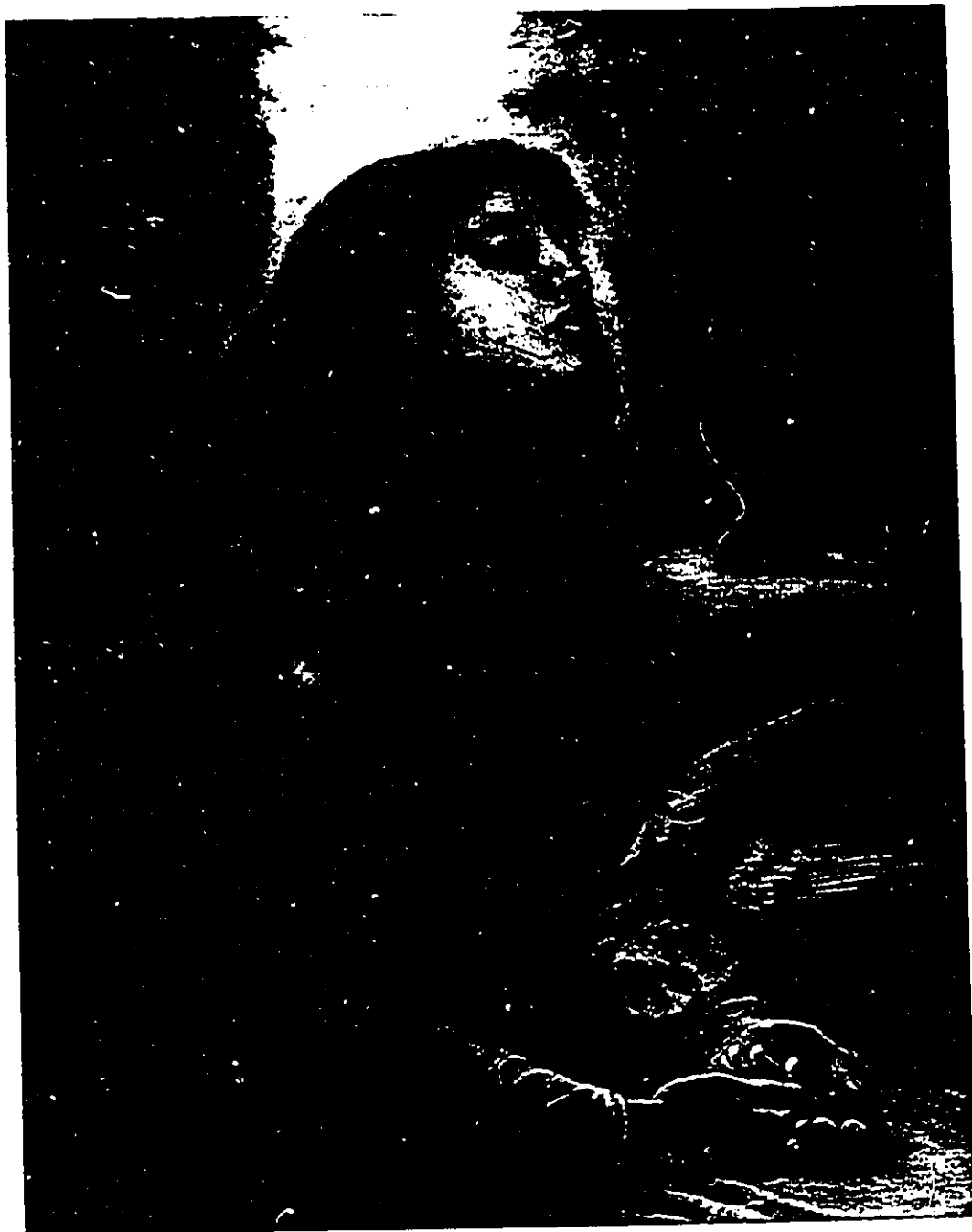
You are as still as you are moving, as alive
as you are fictive, as unbearable as you are
never to be born: he sanctifies you, strokes
between the sun--not this--and moon--not
that, between the god and goddess, art and
life, between not this/not that, the copy of
a copy and the absolute of eyes. Grey-greens
and vegetable shadows, dusk and dreaming

glaze over a rose and pomegranate flesh.
He is the painter and he is the painted; torch
in the hands of Venus' ministers, he writhes
under his own gaze. Try the weight: a phallic
metal, pulsing in the hand--a man, but what
a man. In what a body. What a head of hair.

30. (opposite) DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI. *Astarte Syriaca*. 1877. Oil on canvas, 72 x 42".
Manchester City Art Galleries, Manchester, England. Figure 213, Alicia Faxon. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*.
New York: Abbeville Publishers, 1989.

Too Much Tradition

47. Beata Beatrix, c. 1862-70
 Oil on canvas, 34 x 26 in.
 Tate Gallery, London



50. Found, 1853
 pen and brown ink, brown wash,
 and some india ink with white
 touches on paper, 8 1/4 x 7 1/4 in.
 The British Museum, London

Beata Beatrix; Found

After Dante Gabriel Rossetti, c.1850

Mornings after spirits call, a silver figure of Our Lady
must be set beside a lily and a white rose in a silver vase,
precisely in the middle of the table, with the window open
to a chanting of the mass and cooing doves to still the wagon
wheels, a strange man's voice and heavy boots, a bleating like
a calf, so loudly from behind. Last night, your Grandmother
thought fingernails would lance her seance client's hand.
But fees were paid, he left, and now, as ruddy sunset dusts

the room, her daughter's daughter dares the chair. The one
who drew another's eyes wide open with his pencil, shuts yours
with his oils: a pressure on the wrists, a poppy, ring of linseed
oil and pigment--*we were lovers once*--a dove. But it's another life,
and you don't want to go back with him, not now, not when
rapt in grandmother and breezes, you are quickening the sun.

31. (opposite--upper right) DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI. *Beata Beatrix*, 1862-70. Oil on canvas, 34 x 26". Tate Gallery, London Figure 147, Alicia Faxon. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. New York: Abbeville Publishers, 1989.

32. (opposite-lower left) DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI. *Found*. 1853. Pen and brown ink, brown wash, and some india ink with white touches on paper, 8 1/4 x 7 1/4". The British Museum, London. Figure 50, Alicia Faxon. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. New York: Abbeville Publishers, 1989.



635. SANDRO BOTTICELLI. *THE BIRTH OF VENUS*. C. 1480.
Tempera on canvas, 5'8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times 9'1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.8 \times 2.8 m). Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

The Birth of Venus

after Sandro Botticelli, 1480

More and more you find it pleasant to surround
yourself with goddesses and ferns, the crystal tink
of squirrels scolding from the trees. And brambles.
Gauzy visions that would violate the pastoral are
caught, their curses muffled, rasped by berry canes
into a thousand pink and sky-blue shreds. You
love this pastel reverie. Could be traumatic, then,
to waken on the half-shell, naked on the open sea

with Zephyr breathing down your neck--had you
not long since risen from the waves. But Venus, you
know contrapposto's score. Blown to the shore by lust,
you wrap yourself around, absorb, contain him--*roses*--
lift a dainty foot to step ashore. A robe awaits you.
Blossoms tipped with chrome. A model of indifference.

33. (opposite) SANDRO BOTTICELLI. *The Birth of Venus*. c. 1480. Tempera on canvas, 5' 8 7/8" x 9' 1 7/8". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Figure 635, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



RAPHAEL, GALATEA
1513 (figure 673)

Galatea

after Raphael, 1513

Laurel wreathed and wretched, most ridiculous of monsters,
 he'd have called the cloth he draped about you purple minx,
 but, *Crimson*, you insisted, and he lost you in the splash and
 shout of figures you could sense but not see clamouring.
 At first you were alarmed. Trance gelled your limbs so
 vigorously twisted. But the vision telescoped, and you could
 watch your own shape, then, shift from a sea-nymph into
 tantalizing whispers. Skin like wind, and hair so breezing

it could try the patience of a god, mists into porcelain the
 moment that he touches. Arrows whiz and putti bowstrings
 snap; they resonate in sympathy with something taut. Uncertain
 whether you have chosen or been chosen by the myth, you shower
 centuries of apples. He sees well enough with one eye, mourns
 the wisp of you, drawn safely, ever out of range, by dolphins.

34. (opposite) RAPHAEL. *Galatea*. 1513. Fresco, 9' 8 1/8" x 7' 4". Villa Farnesina, Rome. Figure 673, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



799. DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ. *THE MAIDS OF HONOR*. 1656.
Oil on canvas, 10'5"×9' (3.2×2.7 m). Museo del Prado, Madrid

Las Meniñas

after Diego Velázquez, 1656

Linseed oil and pigment, canvas, palette, brush, a wraith of toxic fumes—he would prefer to still its form, but settles for its dignity. It's all life seems to offer. Still light caught in the divine *Infanta's* hair. And roses, tensely crimson, which adorn the stiff brocade precisely fitted to the Princess Margarita's infant bosom, fixed in thick impasto. Taut as his expression, heavy fabric skirts a rigid frame, concealing frail mortality. A prisoner of liquid glaze, of writhing solvents? Of design.

You love to tease Velázquez. You, the paradox of unencumbered spirits that refuse to be confined—now maid of honour, bride of god, the mother, father, sister, painter—even, yes, the family dog—you are the artist in the court of love, my dear; and he, court jester, is your dwarf, in transitory velvet. Only on the canvas are you ever his.

35. (opposite) DIEGO VELÁSQUEZ. *Las Meniñas*. 1656. Oil on canvas, 10' 5" x 9'. Museo del Prado, Madrid. Figure 799, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



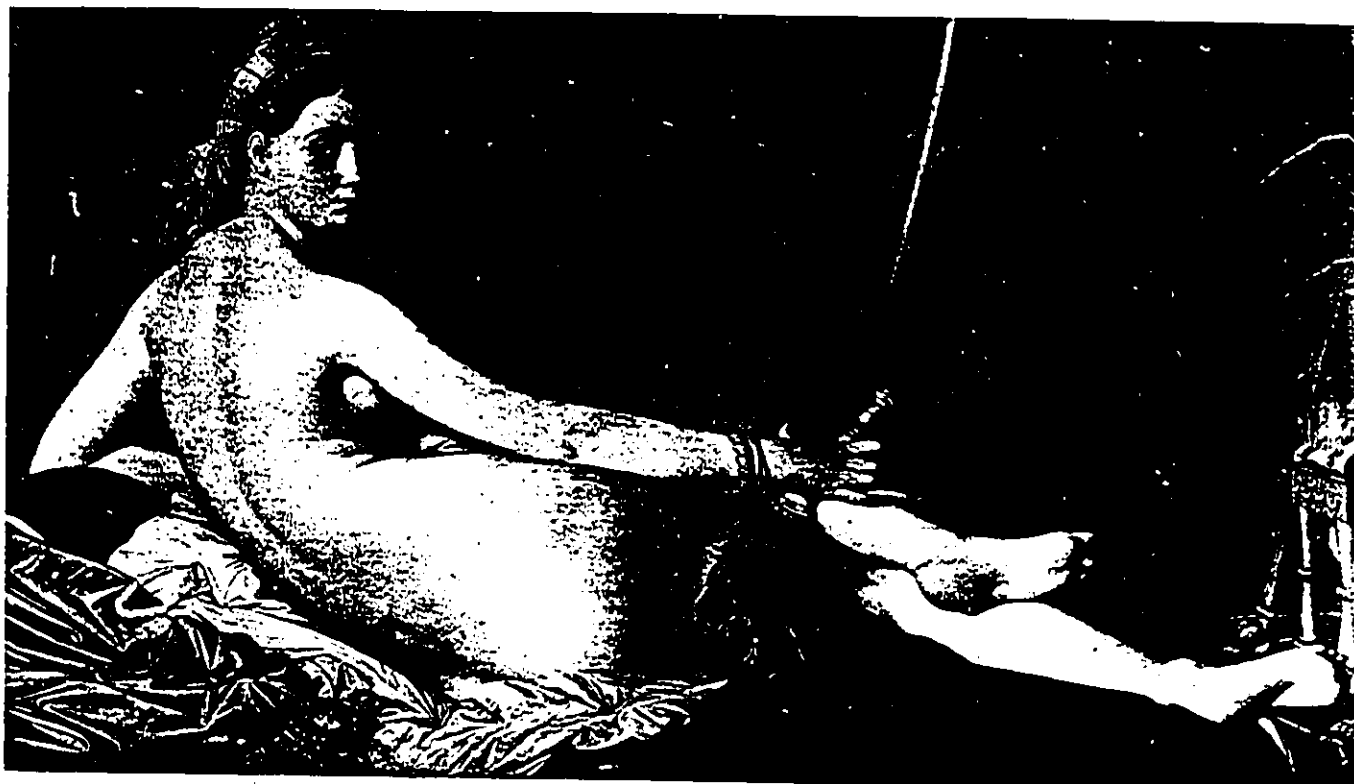
Venus of Urbino

after Titian, c. 1522

You learn, so long as you remain engaged inside
the walls of this estate, that you can smother wails
and whimpers of the most tempestuous of spirits
with a feather boa, and that smoky, stale patchouli
longs to dissipate into a fernspice frame of cool,
luxurious obscurity. A brook--its satin overcloak,
its weeping undersong--runs behind the house,
its smooth green plea so like a wanton fountain's

gurgle through the open window of your mind
you can remember Guidobaldo's stone palazzo,
find yourself the odalisque. Completely naked.
Pearls that were his sighs now dangle from your ears.
Invulnerable in your seeming skin, you are a wraith
about to step into a velvet gown. Almost eternal.

36. (opposite) TITIAN. *Venus of Urbino*, c. 1522. Oil on canvas. Figure 90, Kenneth Clark. *The Nude*. New York: Random House, 1956.



863. JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES. ODALISQUE.
1814. Oil on canvas, 35¼×63¼" (89.7×162 cm).
Musée du Louvre, Paris

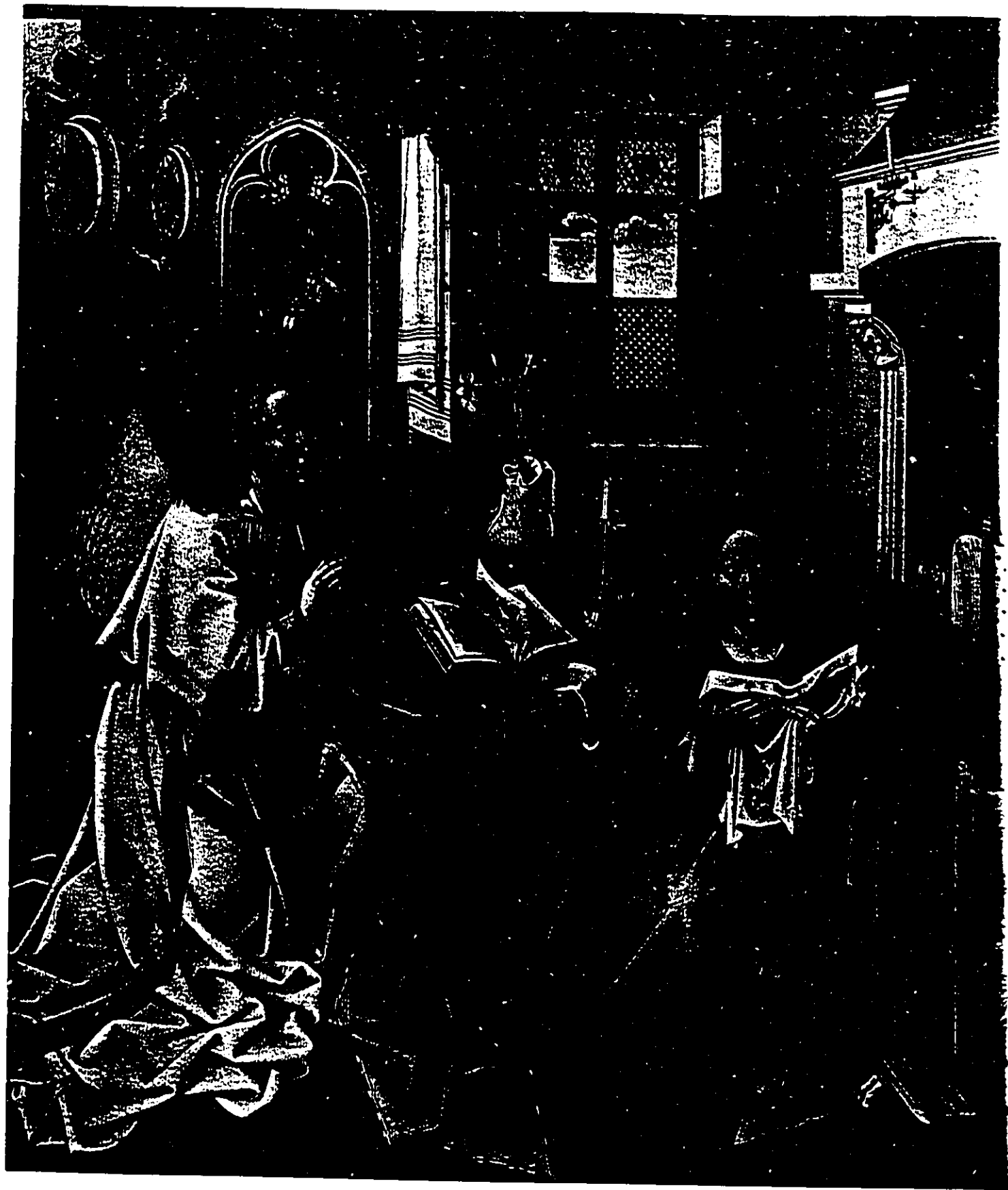
Ingres' Odalisque

after J.A.D. Ingres, 1814

Something foreign drifts into the sea of you and
 drapes you all about in liquid blues. It stretches--
fur, silk, satin--feathers out into a peacock fan,
 urging you to grasp it by the--*longing, longing*--
 handle, pearl fictive vertebrae that filter in and
 out of intimation, cloak your thighs in notions.
 But are you the shell or, quivering, its soft dynamic?
 Does decorum disengage the pertinent desire?

A woman likes to choose. Tumescant hips
 are built for breeding; pearls are currency,
 your turban, a sarong. You see the chamber has
 no door, so callous up those feet and gangle off.
 Or better, look. Your flesh is light as any shade.
 The painter painted feathers. You could fly.

37. (opposite) JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES. *Odalisque*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 35 1/4 x 63 3/4". Musée du Louvre, Paris. Figure 863, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1991.



The Merode Altarpiece

after The Master of Flémalle, 1425

I am kneeling in another time, the panel to the left;
and in another space, a carpenter is building mousetraps.
You don't notice when your candle snuffs, neither see nor
hear what curls up from the wick; but how can you ignore
the subtle humour riding light into your chamber, glazing
through the window on a mote of dust? It is just as well
you cannot see me, but I wish you would take notice of
the angel. Then you might consider how a veil of curls,

like tears, so like your own, streams into velvet shadow,
how such repetition feathers into wings. Disguised, we are
symbolic; and the symbols jostle one another, weightless
in a close room swept by inner breezes, thin, translucent
films, and figures so foreshortened that no matter how
transparent their response to light, the medium prevails.

38. (opposite) THE MASTER OF FLEMALLE. *The Merode Altarpiece (Annunciation)*. c. 1425-30. Oil on wood panels, centre 25 3/16 x 24 7/8". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Figure 547, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



PARMIGIANINO. THE MADONNA WITH THE LONG NECK
c. 1535 (figure 684)

The Madonna with the Long Neck

after Parmigiano, 1535

In a room that is no room--all glazes, browns, and old rose velvets draping from what must be brass rings hung on rails anchored into nothing where there should be walls--you perch upon a throne of air before a purposeless white row of columns, contemplate the nature of the perfect puzzle you have given birth. A brittle nub that nestled in the belly long enough to drain the ocean of you dry has fallen out and flamed into a prophet. *Sunburned Lips,*

O Clear Light, Muddled Fluid. Who, you wonder, is this calling from behind? The mannered child--its limbs all loose, unruly lines; its form, distended--in another place would be abomination, but in your lap, angel eyes adore. As thin silk floods the length of you, their winged hands feather forth: *Distortion has a face not only mothers love. Hold your head up. Smile.*

39. (opposite) PARMIGIANO. *The Madonna With the Long Neck*. c. 1535. Oil on panel, 7' 1" x 4' 4". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Figure 684, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.

39 "Ecce Ancilla Domini!"
(The Annunciation), 1850
Oil on canvas, mounted on panel,
28 1/2 x 16 1/2 in.
Tate Gallery, London



Ecce Ancilla Domini

after Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1850

A narrow cot, unwrinkled sheets, one pillow, very thin:
the tedium. The spare, confining room in which you study
shadows by an open light. And when they fall--as many do
across your bed--when winged, they whisper *Ecce Ancilla*,
it is uncanny. Mother had you prick a lily into scarlet cloth,
and as it glows upon its frame the shadows flicker, falter,
draw the unseen interloper screaming in upon themselves,
then writhing, slowly burn off into sun-bleached linen.

Do not shift your gaze. If even one flame-footed androgynous
dares intimate mortality, the white-daub will bespeak its
petals; seeming angels must be let to fall. Your freedom is
a small but ample room, all white-wash, tiles and empty
space. You never burn the lamp. But how you ache to hear
one pinging, crystal *Domini*. To shatter with the walls.

40. (opposite) DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI. *Ecce Ancilla Domini*. 1850. Oil on canvas mounted on panel, 28 5/8 x 16 1/4". Tate Gallery, London. Figure 39. Alizia Faxon. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. New York: Abbeville Publishers, 1989.



961. HENRI ROUSSEAU. *THE DREAM*. 1910. Oil on canvas, 6'8½"×9'9½" (2×3 m).
Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller

The Dream

after Henri Rousseau, 1910

In the heat of summer night, when moonlight shimmers
through the curtains, you recall a thick, green smell of too much
vegetation teeming in the afternoon, how running water soothed
you as you lay beside the brook, behind grandmother's house.
Now there's a cricket playing *Clémence* on a violin. It's midnight.
Candles titter on the table. You remember as you drift: they
told you second sight should be confined within the basket of
those matriarchal walls lest, like a snake, it turn on you, and bite,

but no one told you such naivete as his could waken in you,
whisper *Chérie, I have need of you to guide my brush*; that then, reclining
on a velvet moss divan, you would be compelled to reach out and
oblivious of lions, elephants, and strange dark creatures howling
in the jungle night, permit a charmer's flute to leave you helpless.
Could he ingratiate you so, and yet be innocent of how the gift burns?

41. (opposite) HENRI ROUSSEAU. *The Dream*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 6' 8 1/2 x 9' 9 1/2". The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Figure 961, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



867. EUGÈNE DELACROIX. *ODALISQUE*. 1845–50.
Oil on canvas, 14 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (37.3 × 46.5 cm).
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England. Reproduction by
permission of the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum

Delacroix's Odalisque

after Eugène Delacroix, 1845-50

Of summer sun and new-mown hay within
the harem of the mind, you are a passionate
oasis eyes of the beholder stroke--*Oh, have me,*
*hold me, lock, stock, barrel me--*with brushes. Lie
there, dark with incense, stale as stale perfume,
listen to the droning on the other side of curtains
not quite closed: a myth of ecstasy reclined.
Abjection, blurred as satin eloquence is stained

by semen-spattered sheets, the fine line drawn
between the squalor and the squalled, the scholar
and the slave: at once a scrap of linen draped
over your shame and Venus' shadow darkening
the wall. Delirium. You dive into the sea of her,
surrender to a depth of sunlight endlessly deferred.

42. (opposite) EUGÈNE DELACROIX. *Odalisque*, 1845-50. Oil on canvas, 14 7/8 x 18 1/4".
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England. Figure 367, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New
York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall,
Inc., 1991.



WILLEM DE KOONING. WOMAN II
1952 (figure 1037)

Woman II

after Willem de Kooning, 1952

Cool--no, cold--with ice-blue icicles and buried
in a snow-bank caught in traffic in a blizzard
with the wind so blasting somewhere frozen
everything could shatter if you move a muscled
turquoise centimetre bracing pupils in his eyes
will slip your hands will everything is turning
into something else--eyes mouth his shoulders
mummy gagged and bound with blazing fingers

slash. Yes, fingers, and a brush, a palette working
biomorphic welter slash and carmine burnt sienna
you are managing to keep your full breasts covered
slash the jagged surface is alive with spit slash wine
and vinegar the sense of too much pillar slash in
everything is too much camouflage is too much salt

43. (opposite) WILLEM DE KOONING. *Woman II*, 1952. Oil on canvas, 59 x 43". The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Figure 1037, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



Rokeby Venus

after Velázquez, c. 1640

A goddess is immortal but the image of a goddess is subjected, eyes as fingers leaving greasy trails, the body in a body-suit all slick with grey and rose light. Cupid is no longer in the belly, holds a mirror that reflects you hiding--what? from whom?--from modesty, a scrap of ribbon barely long enough to wrap around your neck, hang from the ceiling, if there were a ceiling--but the frame

prevents; the frame within the frame suggests a mortal face. The image has been altered. How the furtive miss the art of this, devouring uncanny length, the arms, legs, torso, flesh with an obscenity as smooth as cultured butter. Someone out there wants to cut it, spread it further than a knife.

44. (opposite) DIEGO VELÁSQUEZ. *Rokeby Venus*, National Gallery, London. Oil on canvas. Figure 1, Kenneth Clark. *The Nude*. New York: Random House, 1956.



Olympia; Déjeuner Sur l'Herbe

after Édouard Manet, 1863

How long can a medium endure the smoothest satin,
 heady fragrance, of the most attentive lover's flowers,
 when a scent she longs for--crushed moss, unimpeded
 running water--is to be denied her, motionless, reclining
 on a feather bed? Might just as well be nettles, sharp
 and green. Too much tradition. *Pas encore, Monsieur,*
 you hiss, and watch his eyes go wide. You shudder,
 stretch, sigh, lift the hand he'd placed between your legs

and kick off slippers, throw your head back, laugh. *Let's try*
a little turpentine, you giggle, grab his rag, wipe wrist clear of
 its bracelet, velvet ribbon from your neck, pearl earrings and
 that pale ridiculous camellia from behind your ear. Amused,
 the painter offers you his hand. You smell wet leaf mould,
 hear a splash behind you, know now you will never look back.

45. (opposite-upper) EDOUARD MANET. *Olympia*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 75". Jeu de Paume, Paris. in Russell Ash. *The Impressionists and Their Art*. London: Orbis Publishing, 1983: 52.

46. (opposite-lower) EDOUARD MANET. *Le Déjeuner sur L'Herbe*, 1863. Oil on canvas 82 x 108 1/4". Jeu de Paume Paris. in Russell Ash. *The Impressionists and Their Art*. London: Orbis Publishing, 1983: 49.

Stirring Sunrise



Woman with a
bol, turned to the
1886, 131 - 88,
1077, Musée
rsay, Paris

Femme à L'Ombrelle

after Claude Monet, c.1880

Before the brush is loaded, still your bristles: gaze must
chill its fascination with a wind-whipped vision, howsoever
bustled into sheer cerulean; mask features, not the rippling
focus. You--with tickling intensities of shadow-flapped white
muslin muttering about the ankles, with a parasol poised
to augment what cumulus relief the image offers--cannot
yet determine whether you are lost in half-tone difference,
between a breathless voile and blue delirium, or found

within the mind-swept weeds that rearrange themselves
into an incantation of desire. You nod. He dips into alizarin.
Hot hues exhilarate the grasses, whisk your skirt folds, then,
accelerating, lick into a crimson burst. You pin the beating
complement discreetly to your waist. *Skies could contain such
tumult*, you reflect. *Ah*, the mirror sighs, *but never fragrant blooms*.

47. (opposite) CLAUDE MONET. *Femme à L'Ombrelle*, 1886. Oil on canvas, 131 x 88". Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Figure 81, Plate 129, William C. Seitz. *Claude Monet*. New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1960.



Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat

after Elizabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, 1782

If you are lips, a wild red zinnia wet with mischief of
white lead; if you are nose, cheeks, neck, and shoulders;
you must be the blooming breasts beneath a dusty pink
moire, that tousle fine lawn ruffles as they rise and fall.
As lightly as a single plume, the flesh you wear curls
under a taut brim; the hat and not the woman must
be made of straw. *Voilà! Un VRAI chapeau de paille.*
Rare earths and metals twist; you pound the pigment

out of powdered wig into a saucy turn of phrase: you--
even as the satin wrap you drape about you, edged
with stiff Etruscan lace, is known to have scratched out
eyes of those who dared transgress the picture plane--
you are a loaded brush beside a gleaming palette, still
as delicate as petals, fresh alizarin, and fluid as blood.

48. (opposite) ELIZABETH LOUISE VIGÉE LE BRUN. *Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat*, 1782. Oil on canvas, 97.8 x 70.5 cm. National Gallery, London. Greeting Card, National Gallery Publications Ltd, 1989.



Black Iris III

after Georgia O'Keeffe, 1926

Flowers are a good place to begin. They're small enough
to cradle, large enough to think themselves across the sky.
And they associate, so one can symbolize. Take irises.
Gaze into the pupils' glass, and as the blue-black muscle
dilates, opens and invites--don't know who or what but--
something peppery, expansive, sweet-sour with the juice of
plums and purple haze, begins to fold its palms and, in
a rush of crimson tempered with capricious blues, to greet

you--as you should be greeted--irising so wide and welcoming
the metaphor begins to stiffen. Black hole at the centre of
the eye, it's stirring all the limpid colours of the goddess,
focusing her petals in a place of pigment, full of light.
The flower of the sky, disguised this thinly. Makes
you wonder why you haven't yet been swallowed.

49. (opposite) GEORGIA O'KEEFFE. *Black Iris III*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 36 x 29 7/8". The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Figure 1032, H.W. Janson *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.

A BAR AT THE FOLLIES-BERGERE, 1882

canvas, 95.5 x 130 cm (37½ x 51 ins)

Courtauld Institute Galleries, University of London



A Bar at the Folies-Bergère

after Édouard Manet, 1882

Chandeliers, champagne, a crystal bowl of tangerines,
and orchids wafting from the bosom of a fitted jacket
cut so open at the neck that, even trimmed with lace, it
will command a tophat, tails, moustaches--all that separates
the marble surface of the table you are leaning on from
how you pose, proposing vagaries to the unbending mirror
set before (or is on the wall behind?)--to shift politely in
and out of this intriguing, unconventional arrangement.

Silvered glass. A glazed perspective. Everything abbreviated,
values so much closer. Slip the gaze discretely from your pupil
to the gentleman's in question, find him blatantly accosted by
a smell of spirits. Ladies in their feathers. Full moons, many moons,
all shimmering. *Somewhere there must be an open window.* Would that
such reflections were enough to make a gentleman tea-total.

50. (opposite) ÉDOUARD MANET. *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 37 1/2 x 51".
Courtauld Institute Galleries, University of London. Figure 914, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed.
New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice
Hall, Inc., 1991.



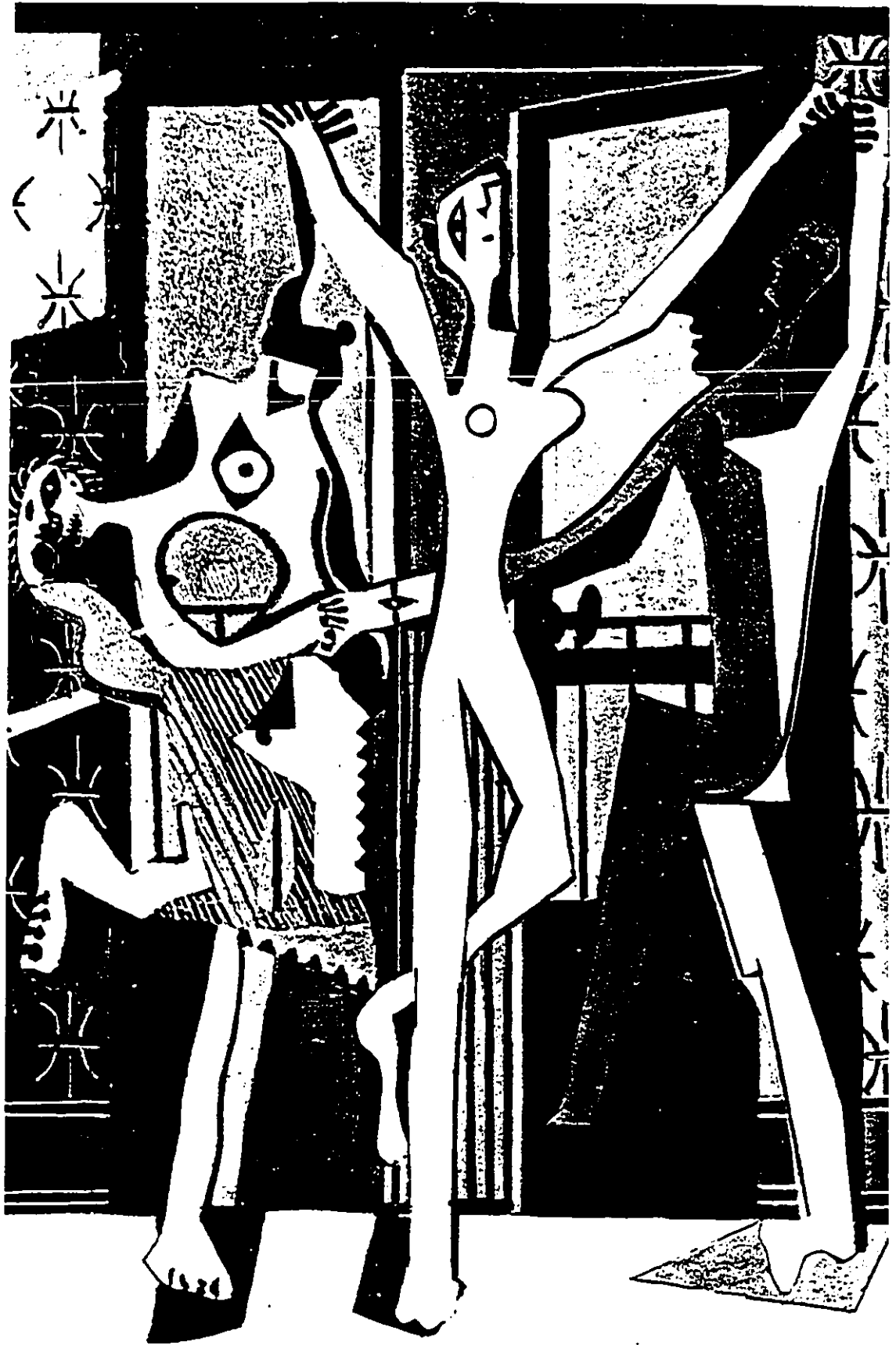
Le Moulin de la Galette

after Auguste Renoir, 1876

Little cakes and kisses circulate as hands-in-hands and
 cheek-to-checkings turn *Moulin de la Galette*. And light,
 the way it dapples leaves, the way they spin. Your eyes
 whirl--pleat, to tuck, to lace, to someone winking--as
 a leaf that thinks itself a straw hat with a band--but
 no, a bowler with a beard--no, top-hat, tails, with
 one arm purled about the waist of *Claire, Hélène, Estelle*
 in hissing taffeta--a windmill at the centre of the sun--

it all begins to wheel. A hand upon your shoulder, low-
 life tapping time. You squint. The cord of something
 domineering snaps; it cracks its dance-hall dazzled
 blur of leaf-light. Shift, and you are leaping, face to
 form to jet-black *joie de vivre*, misting in and out of
 Sunday brushes: set to canvas, yes, but oh, so fancy free.

51. (opposite) AUGUSTE RENOIR. *Le Moulin de la Galette*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 69".
 Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Figure 915, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall.
 revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



The Three Dancers

after Pablo Picasso, 1925

A hand, a claw; a breast, an eye--a man and woman shadowed in a circle dance: his eyes stroke fingers with a candy-floss pink gesso swallows eagerly, but skin is ice. He blinks. A mouth tight as a turtle's; hers is full of teeth. White heat shoots up from left toe through his leg, sex, nipple, to the shoulder of the seething model, into barely touching tips of fingers, shifting what he thinks into distraction. Dancing

with distortion, he is dancing with himself. And thus, night empties shadows. Bound within the door frame, flat dispassionate observers of the g-string air who long for something--charmed? possessed?--are sharp as shallots, salt as blood, and red as red wine vinegar. In shades of shards, the blues are overwrought, but aching familiar.

52. (opposite) PABLO PICASSO. *The Three Dancers*. 1925. Oil on canvas, 84 1/2 x 56 1/4". The Tate Gallery, London. Figure 1014, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



962. PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER. SELF-PORTRAIT. 1906.
Oil on canvas, 24×19¼" (61×50 cm).
Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Kunstmuseum, Basel

Self-Portrait

after Paula Modersohn-Becker, 1906

Something in the "no" of negative is ether,
water, air, is pliant as it is complicit with
the fire that strengthens clay; you tell them
how a giant, strong but heavy with the gentle
sense that she is toothless and declawed, must
lumber in the medium; an archetype without
defense must hide from enemies and live on
garbage since she can no longer dig out grubs

and scratch for berries. So they bring you flowers.
Here, in this place of transit, symbols are as chisels
cheating rock of stone. You want the paste of oil,
the smooth of elements, the fine lines, density of
hues. You tell them, when the painter is a bear
expression may be primitive, but it will never be naive.

53. (opposite) PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER. *Self-Portrait*, 1906. Oil on canvas, 24 x 19 3/4". Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Kunstmuseum, Basel. Figure 962, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



La Danse

after Henri Matisse, 1910

The sky is blue, the grass is green, and you are
ring-around-the dizzy, romping with so many
naked types of you it's easy to forget that there
are pipers--all gone sanguine with the who knows
what of jigs, rounds, reels; their horns, tails, cloven
hooves gone missing, who knows why? The fiddlers
are charging you with rhythm, gazes fully fixed.
You bounce with breasts and jiggle with the toes,

you are a living, loving, livid red. Why separate
the music from the dance, the dancer from these
fingers? Hairs? Your very days are numbered. Note
how, vital to the figure, even though your back is
turned, a daemon self whose hand has slipped is
straining to recover yours--ever, almost touching.

54. (opposite) HENRI MATISSE. *La Danse*, 1909-10. Oil on canvas, 260 x 391 cm. Hermitage, Leningrad. in Volkmar Essers. *Henri Matisse*. Köln, Germany: Benedikt Taschen, 1993: 30-31.



891. JEAN-BAPTISTE CARPEAUX. *THE DANCE*. 1867-69.
Plaster model, c. 15'x8'6" (4.6x2.6 m). Musée de l'Opéra, Paris

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The Dance

after Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, 1867-69

Livelier, and so much more precise than stone,
 you leap out from the centre of yourself--as free
 of breasts and genitals and all the many selves
 who prance about you, leafy crowns and tresses
 curling free of robes, limbs that could be strained
 cast loosely--gaiety drawn from her garments.
 Naked, yes, but not a nude; a plaster phoenix
 rising from the child you were in blazing wings

so many steps beyond the small Rococo, you
 embarrass what was once held throbbing.
 Beat the rhythm of that child upon the mythic
 tambourine; spring up over arms, legs, hands,
 the body of tradition. Woman not a woman,
 wind and sky, you are the spirit of the dance.

55. (opposite) JEAN-BAPTISTE CARPEAUX. *The Dance*, 1867-69. Plaster model, c. 15' x 8' 6".
 Musée de L'Opéra, Paris. Figure 891, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall.
 revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



27. *SALISBURY CATHEDRAL FROM THE MEADOWS*. Oils on canvas. 1831. Lord Ashton of Hyde

Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows

after John Constable, c. 1821

It's not so much a splash of hooves and wheels against the surface of the stream you're drawn to, more the scent of straining horseflesh, men and mud--and yes, an indeterminate, but clearly doggy form that watches from the shore. Absorbed by distance from a tree's crown, by how far, from this perspective, it outreaches Salisbury Cathedral, you mark how meadows draw the eyes that draw *chiaroscuro* clouds. You don't know how you ended up

on all fours, panting by the river Avon, but eyes skim across its rippling surface, white-in flashes of anxiety across the sky and rainbow down to rushes, swallows, wooden bridges, oscillating fields. You feel so much a part of ordered chaos that you can't resist a wagging welcome to *I live by shadows*, and a lolling tongue seems so appropriate you almost bark.

56. (opposite) JOHN CONSTABLE. *Salisbury Cathedral Seen from the Meadows*, c. 1821. Oil on canvas, 59 3/4 x 74 3/4". Lord Aston of Hyde. in Basil Taylor. *Constable*. London: Phaidon, 1973: 171-72.

17 1/2 x 21 1/4 (43.5 x 54.5 cm). The Cone Collection, Baltimore, Maryland.



943. PAUL CÉZANNE. MONT SAINTE-VICTOIRE SEEN FROM BIBÉMUS QUARRY. c. 1897–1900.
Oil on canvas, 25 1/4 x 32" (63.9 x 81.3 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art. The Cone Collection,
formed by Dr. Clarel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland

Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen From Bibémus Quarry

after Paul Cézanne, 1897

He knows it is the nature of a mountain to be still,
its cone to draw eyes swirling from the base to nipple,
flames to airy reaches of the sky, and yet the painter
is afraid to ask the *genius loci*. Someone else must pose.
So you are ordered through the glass, despite the
clash of reds and greens, blue skies and hot vermillion
shadows tickling your skin, to hold that parody of
an exhausted odalisque as long as tilted planes and

flickering hues endure--but why, you wonder, when the
fields are blazing cylinders of invitation, apple trees are
green globe artichokes are breasts so hummingly disguised
that summer is intangible. You smell the fragrance of a form
you've never seen, know someone, somewhere is commanding
this geometry, and how you wish he'd show his face.

57. (opposite) PAUL CÉZANNE. *Mon Sante-Victoire Seen From Bibémus Quarry*, c.1897-1900. Oil on canvas, 25 1/8 x 32". The Baltimore Museum of Art. Figure 943, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.



Wheat Field with Cypressess
Saint-Rémy, late June 1889
Oil on canvas, 73 × 93.5 cm
Private collection, Zurich

Wheat Field and Cypress Trees

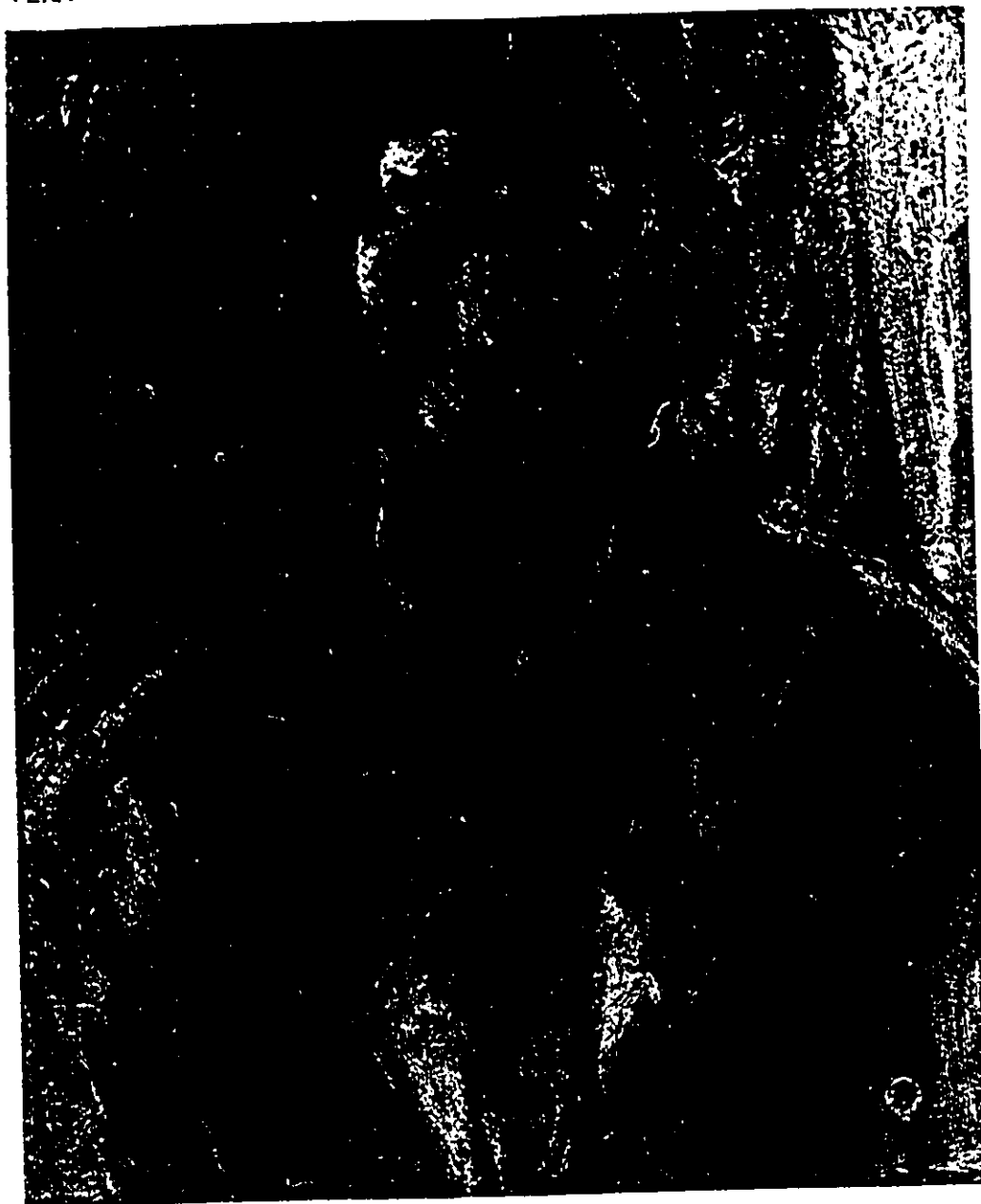
after Vincent Van Gogh, 1889

The neighbour's wheat field is the safest place you know.
 So many tawny heads so close together that their
 windblown, frazzled seething into difficult accord with
 something that a halo used to symbolize makes it seem
 as if each berry is a black note and so difficult to hit
 one has to strike beyond the limits of the keyboard
 into purple shadows, clouds, dark catachismic hills.
 They chant what used to writhe about your head into

an absolute transcendent flow. And cypresses. You love
 their sunlit mystery. The first time that you gazed into
 their mirror of a spirit driven to dispel the diachronic
 breeze, you knew the one behind it was as undemonic
 as a blade of grass. Perennial. With lips set, burning eyes
 determined to illuminate the whirling pool of darkness.

58. (opposite) VINCENT VAN GOGH. *Wheat Field With Cypresses*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 73 x 93.5 cm. The National Gallery, London. Figure 947, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.

F.H. VARLEY
VERA



Vera

after F.H. Varley, 1931

Who would have thought so red a rock
 could keep incessant sun, wind, stinging
 rain within you pounding, drive night from
 the day, beat day from its beating light into
 a pigment fine enough to tread the water in
 your eyes? Could you refuse to dive into such
 emeralds, could you draw rubies through so
 violet a breath if you thought you were anyone

but she? Inviolable? You are the burnt sienna
 sweep that synchronizes doubt with verdigris.
 He strokes, and all of the akashic others,
 whale-song urgent with desire to break you
 through the surface, add their keening. What
 a pleasure, finally to hear the pitch of green.

59. (opposite) F. H. VARLEY. *Vera*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 61 x 50.6 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. in Anne Newlands, ed. *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*. Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books, 1995: 57.



The Ecstasy of St. Theresa

after Gianlorenzo Bernini, 1645

In your later years, finding his amber glow resistible
when lying late into the morning, you not surprisingly
affect an Attic grin. But as a girl, there were the tears.
Before each trek to grandma's parlour, long fasts,
sleepless nights and predawn shivers, creaking up
three dark, deserted flights, alone. And shuddering,
you held yourself as still as death when--*Sit down. Open
to my music*--ordered by the cold, hard, necessary angel.

That your limbs can still be heavy, that his smile, so sweet
a dart, still drives organ thunder through the marble
chapel of your heart; you ought to stop gilt beams' descent,
their pressure threatens to disfigure your white brow. But
slack-jawed, blissfully immured, Theresa's listening for stone's
whir, angel's wings. She's stirring sunrise with her toes.

60. (opposite) GIANLORENZO BERNINI. *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa*, 1645-52. Marble. lifesize. Cornaro Chapel, Sta. Maria della Vittoria, Rome. Figure 750, H.W. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed. New York: Prentice Hall. revised & expanded Anthony F. Janson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1991.

Face the Sideways, Straight

J.E.H. MACDONALD
THE TANGLED GARDEN



The Tangled Garden

after J.E.H. MacDonald, 1921

I used to worship East to West, imbibing light,
 air, water; forming seeds too heavy for the wind and,
 sturdy, rough, a firm stalk, an unconscionable desire
 to burst into the sky. Thick with ochre now, and umber,
 thirsty for the water I no longer have the strength
 to bear, leaves parch and rustle. Turn a countenance
 that used to rival Sol's from sunlight to the medium
 in which I root: see zinnias, still scarlet, blooming.

Orchards bow and apples dream of falling. I am spent
 and crackled, dry but full of seed; I hear the clamour of
 a tangled germ of voices from within. The earth demands
 ascetic posturings: I bend, but wryly—only from the neck—
 not to soil but to the fallen smell of shrivelling leaves, to
 summer's end, the mother of decomposition, to necessity.

61. (opposite) J.E.H. MACDONALD. *The Tangled Garden*, 1916. Oil on beaverboard, 121.4 x 152.4 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. in Anne Newlands, ed. *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*. Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books, 1995: 35.



1932. OIL ON CANVAS, 86.4 x 101.6 cm. ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO, TORONTO. GIFT FROM THE ALBERT H. ROBSON MEMORIAL SUBSCRIPTION FUND, 1942

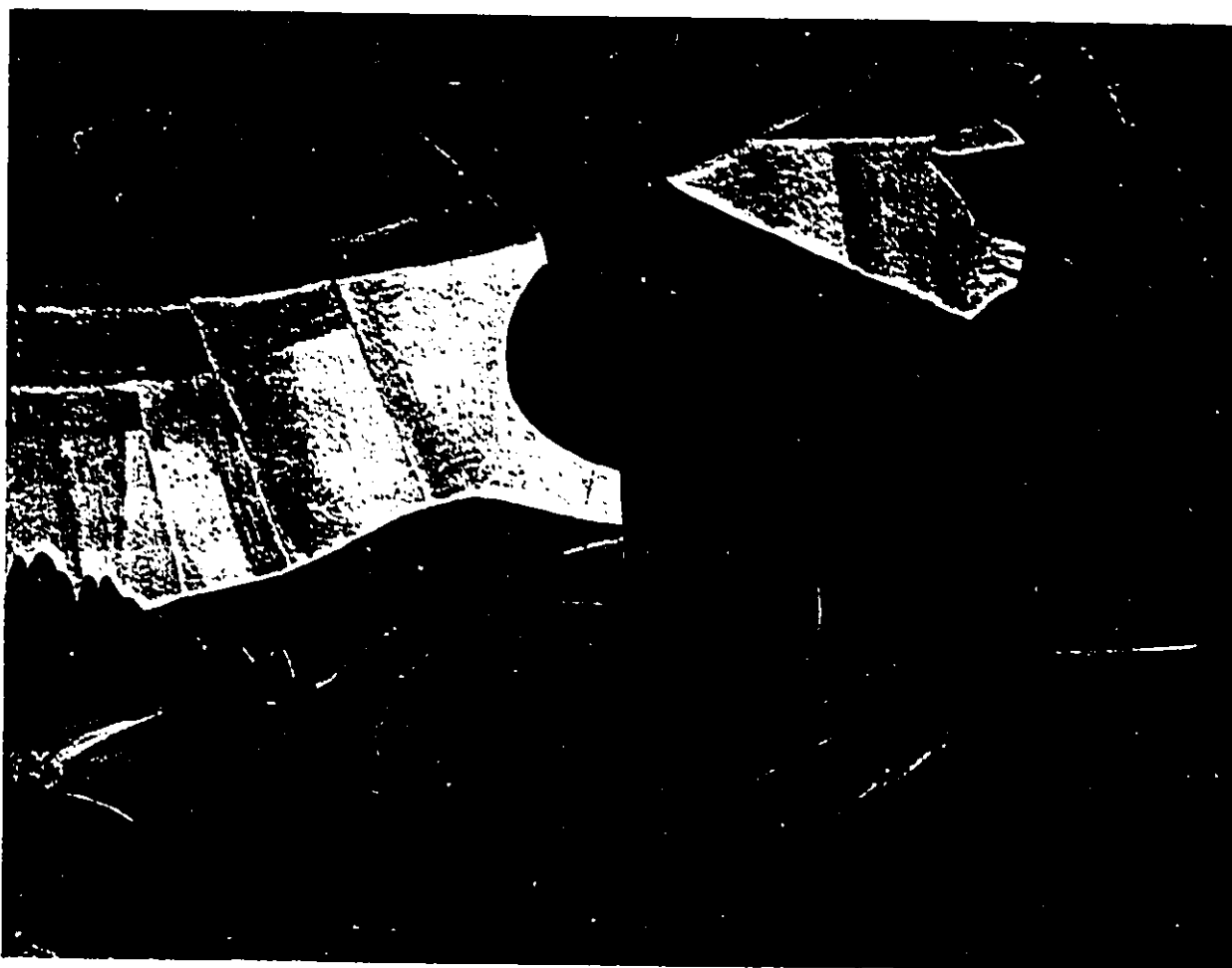
Dhārāna

after F. H. Varley, 1932

You have to let it work. The heat within
that *de-*, *re-*, *op-*, *in-* presses night upon
the waiting--night without a moon, watch
without a sentry, sound without a sense,
and kneeling, almost mad with predawn
nipping at between--you have to let it work:
you are the vessel, gems *encloisonné* to skin.
The veritable boom of decibels that are

not decibels, you are an almost pixellated
breath of phthalocyanine, magenta, aqua,
ultra-deep marine. You never dreamed the
porches of your ears could teem this loudly,
that the earth, a screen, could opalesce, or
eyes could strain the howling through silence.

62. (opposite) F. H. VARLEY. *Dhārāna*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 86.4 x 101.6 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. in Peter Varley. *F. H. Varley*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1983.



Big Raven ✓

Big Raven

after Emily Carr, 1931

They carved his massive beak into the sky,
cut wings against his sides, and bound him
to the earth with claws. They thought because
they had forgotten feathers, he would never fly.
But green flames licked his totem perch and
years of teeming rain, rain seeped so slowly
through a sodden moss that grew upon his back
your wooden mate at last collapsed into decay.

You have resisted brooding. He was old.
You stood so much, so long, so formally together.
Now you must begin your own disintegration.
Native bones that once contained the wind
and shafts of so voluminous a light they dazzle
chant in unison, and what was smothered is released.

63. (opposite) EMILY CARR. *Big Raven*, 1931. oil on canvas, 86.7 x 113.8 cm. Vancouver Art Gallery. in Doris Shadbolt. *The Art of Emily Carr*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979: 81.



Arthur Lismer *Cathedral Mountain* oil on canvas 48" x 56" 1923 Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

Cathedral Mountain

after Arthur Lismer, 1928

So think a gothic mystery, a mountain,
 challenge spruce conventions, look down
 upon little lakes and trickles, seek out faults,
 the origins of inescapable horizons. Think
 an air so empty nothing breaks the ground.
 The weight of distance. Pillars thrust and glaciers
 embrace their towering prey, your buttresses
 display their buttocks; everything is adoration,

cut glass, lead and lust through coloured windows
 in a hopelessly erotic sky. Compose a deity and
 clouds sing rocky praises, figure into ground bass,
 booming, monotone; you soar, a paean whose
 almighty form escapes the seeing. *Mountains*
don't bend in the wind, you say. How very modern.

64. (opposite) ARTHUR LISMER. *Cathedral Mountain*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 48 x 56". Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Plate 16. Lois Darroch. *Bright Land*. Toronto & Vancouver: Merritt Publishing Co. Ltd., 1981.



Grey

Grey

after Emily Carr, 1932

Night falls and the forest darkens; paths that lead into the forest ought to darken, too. But you know you did not dream sanguine dust and grey-green thunder through the bark and needles, nor imagine traces of what once were skin, blood, flesh, bones, pulsing in and out of twilit forms. Where do they come from, why are colours born? If incandescence beckons, must one follow? One needs so high a vantage point to see things hidden in the trees. They hide that skilfully. A sharp-tipped douglas fir who guards

the entrance to the wood begins to glow and, eerily, to slice through its enfolding layers to reveal a delicate, bright, single eye. He fears you will be like the others, blind to what is not quite what it seems, but you are not about to blink. The threshold is self-luminous, a tear-drop pearl. You enter cautiously. There must have been a time when clouds would gather here.

65. (opposite) EMILY CARR. *Grey*, 1931-32. Oil on canvas, 106.7 x 68.9 cm. Private Collection. in Doris Shadbolt. *The Art of Emily Carr*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979: 103.

J.E.H. MACDONALD
THE SOLEMN LAND



The Solemn Land

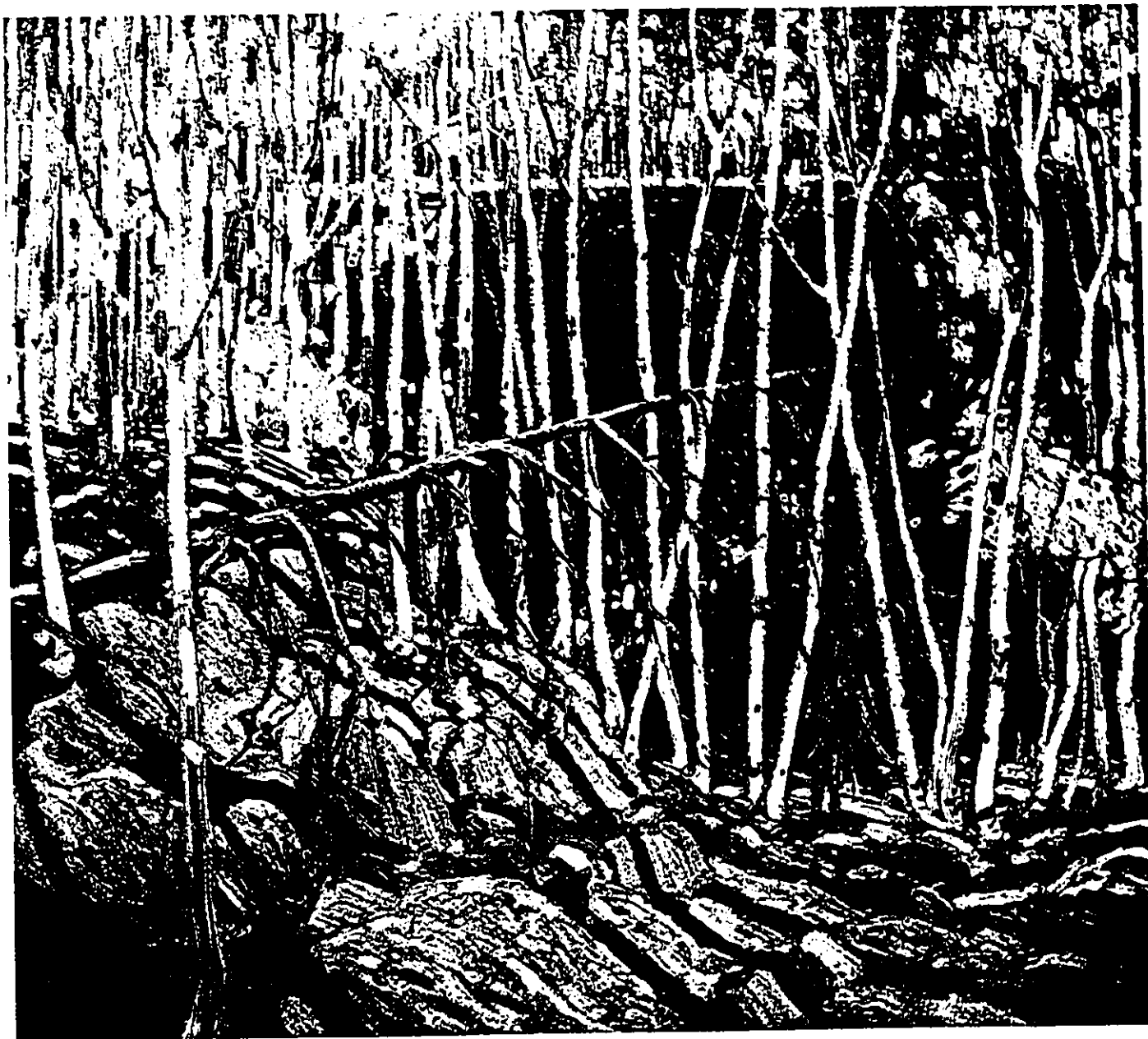
after J.E.H. MacDonald, 1921

I have never let a man think he can think me,
 never let the hills forget who blocks their light,
 the lakes ignore my passing--but if I had not
 gazed into the ruddy glass as I was blowing by
 above this sketchy prospect, it might not have
 burnished; spruce might not have thrummed;
 the river might have flushed, but never liquid rose.
 A most misguided scumble craved Cathedral light.

The mass was crippling his eye, composure bleared
 the greens to grey and purples blue. I pitied, caught
 his leaves before they fell, pinned scarlet ribbons to
 a solemn ground; I lit the breaking sky with cloud.
 My shadow set the sun. Gold is the colour of a muse's
 mist. So much for free brush. So much for the painter.

65. (opposite) J.E.H. MACDONALD. *The Solemn Land*, 1921. Oil on Canvas, 122.5 x 153.5 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. in Anne Newlands, ed. *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*. Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books, 1995: 47.

TOM THOMSON
IN THE NORTHLAND



In the Northland

after Tom Thomson, 1915

Earliest to leaf, the last to drop, canoe-birch
striplings drive their pearl-bones up and ever
into overdrive, as rivulets of shadow gush down
quick vermilion slopes. *The maples are about all
stripped of leaves now, but the birches--*crack and
I am falling, see myself, so near, so far-felt, cut
a firm diagonal across the custom of the bush.
I am a white canoe across the black and blue-fresh

waters, sinking, even as I swim, into the far off
pigments of another shore. I burn into an umber
trunk and crimsoned greens marooned in hollows.
Mine were heart-shaped, these are barbed, but
leaves are leaves. We might not otherwise have met.
A birch fell in the Northland. Did you hear me?

67. (opposite) TOM THOMSON. *In the Northland*, 1915. oil on canvas, 101.7 x 114.5 cm. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. in Anne Newlands, ed. *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*. Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books, 1995: 33.



135. Lake Superior III, c. 1928

oil on canvas

34 1/2 × 40 1/4 in.; 87.6 × 102.2 cm

Collection of The National Gallery of Canada

Lake Superior III

after Lauren Harris, c. 1928

Nothing is more clear than northern azure, nothing
more abstracted than desire. The stumps of it, galed
smooth and branchless as the beating stone within
the breast of an insouciant ascetic—one on either side of
two dead trees in need of shelter—squat close by lest one
forget how fragile limbs can be. Flames drew me to
this bleak arrangement; now the blaze has mellowed,
coupled. Fire is in the world, not of it, and I lean

toward what little passion wood provides. A tempest
blew me here; inviolable as its polished surface seems,
a strong Nor-Wester rages still. But lines are drawn
between sky, water, and the sculpted hills. I am no
more a rooted thing than purple's yellow complement;
the glow I answer to the setting sun is pale but warm.

68. (opposite) LAWREN HARRIS. *Lake Superior III*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 34 1/2 x 40 1/4". National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. in Jeremy Adamson. *Lauren S. Harris*. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1978.



XVI The West Wind

The West Wind

after Tom Thomson, c.1918

Not fond of northern lakes--the chill is too intense and
Zephyr can't be trusted--but when this painter jabs
his loaded brush so pingingly the West Wind howls,
glowlines that contain the distant, placid hills ignite
an elemental roil and, rising from the underpainted
swell of scarlet lake and poppy oil, *Venus Anadyomene*
takes on the bark and needles of a lady jack pine.
She will condescend to step ashore. Within a tree.

The sky can scud itself now, bloodlit shadows bleed.
Tall, erect, so fully fixed in scumbled rocks that wave
on wave of pigment courses up his trunk, he shoots
straight out of the frame. His limbs enclose her. Rooted
by his side, she strains against the wind to hold him.
Gods, they say, inflict no greater punishment.

69. (opposite) TOM THOMSON. *The West Wind*, c. 1918. Oil on canvas, 120.7 x 137.5 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. in Harold Town & David P. Silcox. *Tom Thomson*. Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1977.

148 F. H. Varley *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay* oil on canvas 52" x 64" 1920 National Gallery of Canada



Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay

after F. H. Varley, c.1920

You chose this vantage. Run with it. The wind--
 from frail and clinging to the rock, to whatsoever
 face a rippled world insinuates--yes, run. Swirl
 the cloak of many needles, green it green and
 reeling greener, swing your sweeper to the far off
 white-capped cohort curling sage and wily olive
 strokes into a spatter, flat against the split-rocked
 shore. An azure streak? A scumble? Never roots

beyond the blue horizon. Clouds must know their place.
 The same blast whipping white mist into a frenzy of
 philology, wraps limbs about you in a coat it is
 impossible to tear. As close as you have ever been
 to scudding, fixed into the stippled grey of matter,
 sunning on the outcrop, you are running on the spot.

70. (opposite) F. H. VARLEY. *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay*, c. 1920. Oil on canvas, 132.6 x 162.8 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. in Anne Newlands, ed. *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*. Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books, 1995: 44.



Blue Passage/Island Suite
SERIGRAPH

Blue Passage/Island Suite

after Toni Onley, 1986

To come this far, and yet to breathe unsullied,
 one must have a mind of blue depths, aeronautical
 propinquity to paper, and a good supply of oxygen.
 Would you, otherwise, have set this silk-screened
 mystery of grey mass deliquescing into morning
 light as warm and creamy as a memory of Naples
 yellow, set it weightlessly upon a prussian pigment,
 were its isolation not enhanced by frazzled nostrils?

Nothing? Vaguely haline. One must have adrenalin,
 be cracked and sizzled by a static only nerves remember,
 to endure a line this sharply drawn between what is and
 is not sea. A quiet mountain looming in the distance
 presses one to still incessant engines, leave the fragile
 light and sensibilities to breathlessly converse with sky.

71. (opposite) TONI ONLEY. *Blue Passage/Island Suite*, c. 1986. Serigraph, 22 x 38 cm. in Toni Onley. *Onley's Arctic*. Toronto & Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1989: 108.



144 Arthur Lismer *Rain in the North Country*

"Oil on canvas, 63 1/2" x 17 1/2" c. 1920 McMichael Conservation Collection

Rain in the North Country

after Arthur Lismer, c.1920

On days like this wind can't decide
if, driven like the rain, it wants you
tall and cool, or flat out, splintered
on the rocks. It simply blows. Grim
blusters sweep and sheets of freezing
splat. If he had limned you flexibly,
you'd shiver; cellulose, you face the
sideways, straight. This is a still-wet

season, calm before the brush--*no-time-*
to-dry-it--blends a rise and setting sun,
insinuates its red-gold into grey-green
ecstasies where leaves are needles. Cold
light pricks the skinless finger, colour
pricks the eye. It wants to shake things.

72. (opposite) ARTHUR LISMER. *Rain in the North Country*, c. 1920. Oil on canvas, 9 3/4 x 12 1/8".
McMichael Conservation Collection. Plate 10. Lois Darroch. *Bright Land*. Toronto and Vancouver:
Merritt Publishing Co. Ltd., 1981.



LAWREN S. HARRIS: NORTH SHORE, LAKE SUPERIOR. 1926. OTTAWA, NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

North Shore, Lake Superior,

after Lauren Harris, 1926

White and dry boned, satined, weathered free,
 a ghost sits gaping, mystified. And were it other
 than an empty cage, were rock less rocky, sunset
 less refined, the clouds might howl themselves
 into transparent bears and wolves. But listen.
 Millwheels. Stark against nirvanic skies,
 an archetypal treeshell--me, mine--cast-off
 ligneous confinement grinds against particularity.

One needs a mind of lifeless roots to grasp this
 icon of iniquity, not to be caught up in glaring
 northern hues. *My liberty*. If Sol's rays made the
 stones whirl, yellows were illumination's source,
 could light shoot out of the barren, thus, and would
 the stump of everyday be so self-luminous, so white?

73. (opposite) LAWREN HARRIS. *North Shore, Lake Superior*. 1926. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50".
 National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. in Jeremy Adamson. *Lauren S. Harris*. Toronto: Art Gallery of
 Ontario, 1978.



Midnight Sun, Baffin Bay
WATERCOLOUR, MAY 24, 1986

Midnight Sun, Baffin Bay

after Toni Onley, 1975

In a watercolour world, muted cloud that makes
it possible to bear the midnight sun is an idea,
glycerine that keeps your medium from freezing is
a hard fact. Only light is unstained. Wet on wet,
what you choose not to paint is so intoxicated by
the rough tooth of the paper, cold bites edges clean.
What used to flow is solid now, what's solid, boneless,
and a berg begins the exquisation. This, your trial,

is by variations on infinity that wash an arctic
air, by clarity so blue-grey it is frozen in the eye
before you even grasp the brush. An ice cake
floating past reminds you, with the last stroke
you must toss that brush into the icy waters,
watch it drift into the too-salt, never-setting sun.

74. (opposite) TONI ONLEY. *Midnight Sun, Baffin Bay*, 1986. Watercolour, 28 x 38". in Toni Onley *Onley's Arctic*. Vancouver & Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1989: 125.

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Vita Auctoris

Since 1980, Julie Dennison has made her home in Victoria-by-the-Sea, Prince Edward Island. She lives there, in a very old, white clapboard house, with her husband and two woodstoves. In the summer, there is gardening; in winter, there are long, exhilarating walks along the iced-over Northumberland Strait.

In 1987, Mrs. Dennison began part-time study at the University of Prince Edward Island, in order to upgrade her certification as a kindergarten teacher. One thing led to another. She soon found herself more interested in literature than education; Mrs. Dennison decided to give up teaching, and to attend university full-time. Watercolour painting had been her expressive medium, but a course in Canadian Poetry changed that. She discovered, when a painter finishes a painting she is finished with the work, whereas a poet can engage the finished project over and over again. This ongoing relationship with the created work was irresistible.

The Medium is Mrs. Dennison's first foray into ekphrasis. It has been a most rewarding project. It has successfully integrated academic and creative interests, and opened up a field of fascinating theoretical inquiry. Three of these poems will be published in a forthcoming issue of *Grain*; others wait expectantly on desks of journal editors.